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Chairman: Mr. Mernier .... (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to offer you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee for the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We have no doubt that, under your leadership, we will achieve positive and timely results. I pledge my delegation's cooperation to you in all your work. In particular, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his precise analysis of the challenges to and commitments and responsibilities of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

This year, the international community is under the unshirkable obligation to take concrete steps to ensure that the nuclear non-proliferation regime is respected. That any State should try for any reason to shirk this responsibility would be unacceptable and inexplicable. In the past two years, important progress has been made in the prohibition of nuclear testing and in accessions to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), although some States remain reluctant to accede. Significant progress is also represented by the Ottawa Convention on the total prohibition of anti-personnel mines.

Nevertheless, frustration has mounted in 1998 over the tests that were carried out in the spring in South Asia, marking the expansion of the club of nuclear Powers and ending the restraint which those traditionally non-nuclear States had demonstrated in this respect over the past 50 years. We also regret that no progress has been made in nuclear disarmament and that talks to establish START III are stalemated.

It is clearer today than ever before that the only possible security in the area of weapons of mass destruction rests on the courageous decision purely and simply to eradicate these types of weapons. We cannot continue to live under this threat to every way of life on Earth, which has also been used as a deterrent.

In the light of this scenario, we are proud of the Political Declaration of the Southern Cone Common Market, Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace, signed in Ushuaia, Argentine Republic, on 24 July 1998. This Declaration establishes a support network for non-proliferation activities in all relevant international forums, reaffirms full support for the Treaty of Tlatelolco and declares the Zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

We should also highlight the resolution declaring the nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas, submitted by members of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We hope that it will receive significant support from the majority of States Members of this Organization for the third time.

Within the framework of these efforts, Uruguay supports the entirety of the ministerial declaration entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", approved on 9 June 1998 by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden.

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

In 1997, the Organization of American States adopted the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Illegal Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, which is fundamental to cooperation in this sphere and which could be the basis for debate in a United Nations context. My delegation is convinced that the international community has an important role to play in this area — and that the present situation is favourable to joint action. We therefore support the call for an international conference on measures to fight the illicit transfer of small arms.

The United Nations system has a major role to play in this area, and we know that the tasks facing the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs are not easy. Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala's experience in these areas gives us all hope, and we support the initiatives he has already taken in every area under his responsibility.

The delegation of Uruguay believes that greater transparency and greater openness in the area of armaments are keys to building confidence among States.

As soon as its work for 1999 begins, the Conference on Disarmament must consider the matter of expansion of its membership. The time has come for States to make their contributions to the cause of peace, and any argument against this is inadmissible. We appeal to present members of the Conference to reconsider modernizing that body on an urgent basis.

I reiterate my country's commitment to the cause of general and complete disarmament. We believe that progress already made must be consolidated, and that progress yet to be made must be made as soon as possible. Uruguay firmly believes in replacing the culture of conflict with a culture of peace, and will support all efforts to that end.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): Since this is the first time I am addressing the Committee under your chairmanship, Sir, let me congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to serve the Committee. I have no doubt, Sir, that, with your diplomatic skill and competence, you will be able to steer the work of this Committee with all due vigour. Allow me also to pay tribute to your predecessor, my brother from Botswana, Ambassador Mothusi Nkgowe, for the way in which he managed the work of the Committee last year. I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the comprehensive statement he delivered on Monday, 12 October 1998.

Disarmament is one area which the international community cannot ignore, since it remains the cornerstone of this world body, the United Nations. So long as weapons of mass destruction remain in our midst, it is inconceivable to talk about stability in the world.

The instability of the world has been heightened by recent developments in South Asia. These developments have confirmed our fears concerning the lack of universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). There is an urgent need to address the issue of the universality of that regime, in order to avoid the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Hence the need to remove the climate of uncertainty. The non-proliferation regime can be effective only if accompanied by a serious commitment to negotiate in multilateral forums a mechanism that would lead to general and complete disarmament. Developments in South Asia have demonstrated once again that weapons of mass destruction remain a threat to the existence of mankind.

Namibia signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) here at the United Nations in September 1996 because we believed that the Treaty demonstrated the resolve of the international community to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the announcements made by the Prime Ministers of India and of Pakistan on moving towards adherence to the CTBT. These are positive developments which will eventually lead to the early entry into force of the Treaty and to its universality. It is also important to give full support, financial and otherwise, to the development and functioning of the international monitoring system in order to enable the verification regime to be effective. Namibia will continue to honour its commitment to the Organization.

It is unfair to talk about curbing the proliferation of nuclear weapons without addressing the elimination of those weapons. While the cold war ended almost a decade ago, progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons leaves much to be desired. At the bilateral level, there has been little progress between the United States of America and the Russian Federation as far as the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II) is concerned. We call for the ratification of the START II treaty, so as to make possible the immediate commencement and early conclusion of a START III process. It is my delegation's sincerest hope that once negotiations have been completed on a START III treaty, the two largest nuclear-weapon States will be able to work on further reductions of their nuclear arsenals.

The menace of anti-personnel landmines has continued to wreak havoc and to cause untold suffering to innocent civilians. Some southern African States, including my own country, Namibia, are victims of these mines, something that hampers not only the utilization of productive agricultural land but also the delivery of goods and services to the areas affected by this menace. In keeping with its commitment to international humanitarian law, Namibia signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in October 1997 and ratified it in September 1998. Namibia is gratified by the Mozambican Government's offer to hold the first meeting of States parties, in Maputo in May 1999. It is my ardent hope that we will as many States as possible will become signatories of the Convention before the Maputo meeting. Since this issue is of international humanitarian concern, my delegation is asking for a commitment by all States to sign and ratify the Ottawa Convention as a way of saving our citizens from the untold suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines.

However, as the campaign for ratification of the Convention gains momentum, we should not lose sight of the urgent need to demine the countries that are seriously affected by or infested with landmines. By the same token, the international community should continue to render all necessary humanitarian assistance to the victims of these deadly weapons.

Small arms and light weapons and their proliferation are a source of concern to my Government. The outbreak of internal conflicts has made it possible for these weapons to be in good supply, thus making it impossible, even after the conflicts have stopped, to control and regulate the supply of these weapons. In some parts of the world, small arms and light weapons are, unfortunately, a lucrative business. Thus, in order to curb the illicit transfer of these weapons, concerted efforts by regional groups are needed to put into place a mechanism which would bring about a legally binding instrument. My delegation welcomes the efforts of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and light weapons and its recommendation to convene an international conference to deal with this matter.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of the Holy See.

Mr. Martino (Holy See): As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship and the members of the Bureau on their election. I am certain that under your expert leadership the work of this Committee will come to a successful conclusion.

The international community has in recent times witnessed some positive, although modest, trends in disarmament. An anti-personnel-landmine treaty has come into existence, and all those who worked to make this a reality deserve congratulations. Unknown numbers of innocent civilians, particularly children, will be spared the cruel maiming and death caused by these evil instruments. The Holy See, which expeditiously ratified the treaty, calls on all nations to do the same.

The Holy See notes another recent gain in the new momentum given to the issue of small arms. Small arms bring violent death, injury and psychological trauma to hundreds of thousands of people each year. These simple and comparatively inexpensive weapons of death find their way into areas of conflict and instability and, shockingly, even into the hands of children, who are locked into a culture of violence. Casualties often occur in the context of religious, ethnic, political and national conflicts, which result in millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. The weaponization of society fuels cycles of violence, despair and, ultimately, State collapse. Thus the establishment of the United Nations group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms to work alongside the Vienna Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice is a positive step forward.

At the recent meeting held in Oslo, Government officials agreed that Governments have the primary responsibility for reducing the flow and accumulation of small arms. A study by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace noted the anomaly by which certain States have stringent controls on the international transfer of heavy arms, but few, if any, regarding the sale of small arms and on guns. The supply of small arms must be regulated at its source at the same time as efforts are being made to lessen the demand and to choke off access to illicit supplies. In certain areas, there is an urgent need to ensure a more effective control of stockpiles. Furthermore, the sale of excess supplies of small arms and light weapons, rendered redundant either through modernization or reduction in the size of military forces, can lead, in a cascading effect, to an ongoing flow of sophisticated arms from developed to developing countries.

Since society also has an important role to play — for the human cost of small-arms casualties is a societal issue — reduced arms expenditures and increased health-care costs could enable more resources to be directed towards sustainable development programmes. The strain on public health-care facilities in affected areas would be relieved, and the physical and mental health of individuals and families improved. Recent efforts to bring together those who deal with international arms control and disarmament, humanitarian law, peace and security, public health, gun control, international development and conflict resolution are hopeful signs of a new global awareness.

The Holy See appeals in particular for increased measures to be taken to effectively identify those individuals and groups who traffic in arms outside all bounds of legal control and who, through their activity, unscrupulously contribute to violence and instability. More decisive international police and intelligence cooperation is required. A reliable system of marking small arms would make tracking more effective. All Governments must ensure maximum transparency and absolute respect for their own norms and the norms of the international community concerning arms transfers, especially to conflict areas.

Turning to the nuclear-weapons field, the worthy initiative by eight States from different areas of the world, which have formed a coalition on a new agenda, is a welcome advance. They have called on the Governments of the nuclear-weapon States and the nuclear-weapon-capable States to commit themselves unequivocally to the elimination of nuclear weapons and to agree to start work immediately on the practical steps and negotiations required for its achievement. In this context, the development of the Middle Powers Initiative, a coalition of prominent international non-governmental organizations, is also welcome. It aims at encouraging the Governments of the nuclear-weapon States and the nuclear-weapon-capable States to move rapidly to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

A measure of progress was made this year in the tentative agreement reached at the Conference on Disarmament to establish committee discussions on a fissile material cut-off treaty. This work would be enhanced by a general recognition that steps towards non-proliferation must go hand in hand with steps to disarmament. The activation of the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs signals the higher priority that the United Nations itself will give to disarmament activities. We wish a successful outcome to the good work of Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala.

The review of positive developments I have just given should fill us with encouragement for the future. A distinct mark of our time, however, is that the work of disarmament is proceeding slowly. But an offsetting trend of negative development is slowing us down further. These negative trends must be identified in order for us to take action. Foremost is the breakdown in the preparatory process for the year 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In two sessions, held over two years, the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference has struggled to find an acceptable format for deliberations on nuclear disarmament. The debates on terminology, subsidiary bodies and schedules are but a surrogate for the real debate over a comprehensive programme to eliminate nuclear weapons.

It is not just the NPT that is in trouble. The impasse in the ratification processes of both START II and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty bespeak the lingering resistance to disarmament. Further progress is inhibited by the failure to consolidate hard-earned gains. The testing of nuclear weapons by States which stand outside the NPT exacerbates the danger caused by a weak non-proliferation regime. Nuclear testing by any nation is to be deplored. Criticism of those who test, however, does not deal adequately with the central problem.

The central problem is the determination of nuclear-weapon States to carry their nuclear weapons into the twenty-first century, despite their obligation under the NPT to negotiate nuclear disarmament. The continued existence of 30,000 nuclear weapons almost a decade after the end of the cold war poses a grave danger to humanity. This is further worsened by the fact that 5,000 of these weapons are on alert status, meaning they are capable of being fired at 30 minutes' notice. The danger of nuclear catastrophe through accident or terrorism is an unacceptable risk.

Nothing reveals the negative trends in disarmament as clearly as the continued insistence that nuclear weapons are essential to national security. To make the exaggerated claim that nuclear weapons are an aid to peace can only provoke other States to do the same. I would like to recall the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which says that States have an obligation to conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. Moreover, what is deeply troubling is the prospect of a new nuclear arms race. The modernization programmes of those who already have nuclear weapons, combined with the acquisition of nuclear weapons by other States and research now going on in still other States, plunges the world into more danger than that which existed even during the cold war. The longer this situation continues, the more a growing number of States will falsely claim that nuclear weapons are legitimate.

The Holy See has stated before, and states again, that nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the twenty-first century. They cannot be justified; they deserve condemnation. The preservation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons demands an unequivocal commitment to their abolition.

My delegation believes that the world must move further and further towards the abolition of nuclear weapons through a universal non-discriminatory ban, with intensive inspection by a universal authority. This process would begin with the nuclear-weapon States committing themselves unequivocally to the elimination of nuclear weapons and without delay pursuing in good faith and bringing to a conclusion negotiations to this end.

Practical steps to move this process forward should be taken immediately, such as de-alerting and deactivating nuclear weapons. A pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons should be made as an interim step by every State possessing nuclear weapons. Furthermore, it would be a constructive step to hold an international conference on nuclear disarmament in which both Governments and civil society could unite their strength to develop the political will to take the courageous steps necessary for abolition.

The great task ahead for the twenty-first century is to move the world from a culture of violence and war to a culture of peace. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has already taken the lead in promoting a culture of peace. This consists of promoting values, attitudes and behaviours reflecting and describing social interaction and sharing, based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, human rights, tolerance and solidarity. Rather than intervening in violent conflicts after they have erupted and then engaging in post-conflict peace-building, it is more humane and more efficient to prevent such violence in the first place by addressing its roots.

Let it not be said that the promotion of a culture of peace, the rooting out of the causes of violence and the abolition of nuclear weapons are unreachable goals. The world has rid itself of the evils of legalized slavery, legalized colonialism and legalized apartheid. Those were eliminated as a result of rising global awareness and political determination. So, too, must the growing momentum to make nuclear weapons illegitimate and eliminate them now be accompanied by political action by all States. Humanity deserves no less from us.

Mr. Palihakkara (Sri Lanka): My delegation wishes to congratulate you most warmly, Mr. Chairman, on your election. We are assured of a productive session under your leadership.

As we begin this year's session, the temptation to draw up a balance sheet of the achievements and concerns relevant to disarmament and international security may appear even more pronounced. While it would be rather simplistic to assess the complex multilateral disarmament agenda by taking a debit-and-credit approach, one cannot belittle achievements and wish away problems. As you observed in your opening statement, Mr. Chairman, one need not be overly pessimistic.

First of all, we have seen more positive reportage from the Conference on Disarmament this year than was possible the year before. Ad hoc committees were established to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty and to address the long-standing issue of negative security assurances. Consultations have also been under way on the questions of outer space, transparency in armaments and anti-personnel landmines. In the treaty areas, the Chemical Weapons Convention is being operationalized through some intensive work by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague, while important work has also been accomplished in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. We have also received the positive news that the work on a compliance protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention has made some headway. My delegation, however, wishes that there were broader-based consultation processes for expediting these negotiations.

Sri Lanka welcomes Brazil's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). With 187 States parties, the NPT represents the broadest-based treaty regime committed to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

While these positive developments have been acknowledged, the international community remains concerned over the lack of tangible movement on the core issue of nuclear disarmament. Consultations on this pivotal question in the Conference on Disarmament remain inconclusive and are undefined in terms of its eventual goal. On the bilateral plane, the START process seems to have stagnated. The nuclear-weapon States appear to be trapped in their own argument that the question of nuclear disarmament, while being a matter of concern to all, should nevertheless remain within the exclusive purview of the possessors. The important consensus the international community achieved at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to chart a course towards the elimination of nuclear weapons seems to have lost its way in this seemingly circular argument about the negotiating or deliberative competence.

While deliberations and negotiations on nuclear disarmament remain virtually paralysed, doctrines have continued to evolve, upholding the further utility of nuclear weapons, despite the fact that the cold war rationale for nuclear arsenals has ceased to exist any more. This is a trend that can be reversed only by activating a multilateral nuclear disarmament process which will pave the way for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons — a goal the international community has unreservedly endorsed in various international treaties and at various international conferences.

Sri Lanka has consistently contributed to the consensus-building process in the international security debate, within and outside the United Nations, beginning with the historic first special session devoted to disarmament, in 1978. We earnestly hope that the current session of the First Committee will produce a pragmatic and well-focused set of decisions and pronouncements that will avoid redundancies and diffusion of focus. Our output this year should outline a framework for international action to achieve the commonly shared goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We have seen a number of well-intentioned and carefully crafted proposals emanating from the current session that deal with the many complex aspects of the nuclear disarmament process. We support the general thrust of these initiatives. We hope that this can be harmonized through a transparent consultation process so that the First Committee can come up with a set of cogent and well-defined recommendations addressed to a series of bodies and events that will address this all-important nuclear disarmament issue in the period leading to the next millennium. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the NPT Review Conference in the year 2000 and the proposed special session on disarmament must all work in tandem and coherently in order for the positive synergies of these proposals and the political momentum they generate to be harmonized and put to optimal use to advance a broad-based nuclear disarmament process.

My Government has stated its views on nuclear tests in South Asia. This is consistent with our long-standing policy of speaking against continued nuclear-test explosions by any country in any part of the world. We are pleased to note the statements made by India and Pakistan at the highest levels concerning their positive attitude towards joining the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and their decision to join the Conference on Disarmament negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

This brings me to the necessity to avoid acrimonious debate over issues, however complex and contentious they might be, in addressing international security questions that impinge on the vital security interests of countries. A more pragmatic process of engaging countries to promote de-escalation, cessation of testing, confidence-building and disarmament rather than further acrimony based on selectivity would be the course we advocate in dealing with this situation in the post-test period. We believe that the First Committee's duty is to encourage this process of de-escalation, confidence-building and engagement through multilateral, bilateral and other forms of dialogue. We hope that the resolutions on the subject of nuclear tests will follow this positive and more pragmatic approach, rather than an acrimonious one.

The post-cold-war period has brought about developments in the international security domain that clearly demonstrate that the old agenda is not fully equipped to deal with the newly emerging challenges. Priorities, too, need adaptation in accordance with current realities. One of the main security challenges in the post-cold-war era is the phenomenon of the illicit arms trade, which seems to be driving many a conflict around the globe. It is true to say that weapons by themselves do not wage war, that people do. Nevertheless, illicit arms, terrorism and illegal fund-raising abroad have become self-supporting cycles sustaining conflicts, particularly in the developing world. This has not only brought about a major security challenge within and among States, but has also resulted in raising the toll in a large number of conflicts that are ongoing even today.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his address in 1995 to the World Summit for Social Development, described this unprecedented challenge as a supranational subversive threat to international peace and security. The nexus between illicit arms trade and international criminal organizations clearly points to the need to address the problem as a matter requiring specific international cooperative measures. This can no longer be treated as a law-and-order problem relegated to the limited capabilities and authority of national law enforcement bodies. The manifestations of the illicit arms trade have assumed disturbing transnational dimensions. The forces and technologies that drive the globalization processes may be unwittingly supporting the activities of criminal groups that indulge in this activity. We therefore believe that it is time for the First Committee to initiate some specific action through the General Assembly to place this issue squarely on the international agenda. We hope that a focus and specific recommendation on this issue will emerge from our deliberations this year.

The United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, on which Sri Lanka has been honoured to serve, has made a comprehensive analysis of complex aspects of this problems. We will continue to actively participate in that exercise to further examine the question, with a view to making recommendations for measures on international cooperation.

We would like to commend the Department for Disarmament Affairs for its initiative to establish a focal point for coordination on small arms. My delegation would like to urge the Department to accord priority to illicit arms trade issues in their work.

We are also gratified to note the adoption by the member States of the Organization of American States of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. This is a ground-breaking instrument of international cooperation against a clear and present security threat.

We have also noted with appreciation the role being undertaken within the framework of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to develop measures to combat illicit trafficking in firearms and explosives to be incorporated into a protocol to the convention against organized transnational crime.

Like the delegation of Colombia, we believe that such actions on a broad front will further strengthen the international community's resolve to combat the problem of illicit arms.

Statements in this debate and the documentation before the Committee signify the growing support for the proposal to hold an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. We are also grateful to the Government of Switzerland for offering to host and provide facilities for this conference. Judging from the replies received from a large number of Member States, it is clear that there is a wide measure of support for the First Committee's making a positive pronouncement on the holding of this international conference as soon as possible. It would be necessary to agree on a thorough preparatory process, as well as to develop sound technical inputs, including through the valuable work being undertaken by the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts.

Turning now to another item on our agenda, my delegation hopes that the positive attitude that prevailed in the consultations relating to the prevention of an arms race in outer space will bear fruit this year by producing a forward-looking resolution on this subject. This item has continued to enjoy extremely broad-based support in the Conference on Disarmament, where an overwhelming majority of delegations supported the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on this subject. Sri Lanka, together with the delegation of Egypt, hopes to submit a draft resolution on this agenda item that will hopefully facilitate a consensus in the 1999 session of the Conference on Disarmament that will enable more productive work in an ad hoc committee.

My delegation would also like to express its appreciation of the work being undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. Sri Lanka has been an active participant in a number of programmes initiated by the Centre in Kathmandu, and we value their contribution to the process of promoting awareness and confidence-building in the region.

If we have been selective in dealing with only a few items on the agenda of the First Committee, it is not because we downgrade the priorities attached to others. We sought to highlight what we consider topical in terms of new challenges faced by many developing and non-aligned countries as they seek to grapple with the multiplicity of developments in the post-cold-war period over which they have little or no control. It is through international cooperation and an enlightened multilateral process of deliberation and negotiation that the international community can deal with the contemporary challenges in a world buffeted by the forces of globalization. The developed countries and the nuclear-weapon States should be just as interested in making this multilateral process a success, since insecurity or volatility anywhere can pose a threat to stability and well-being everywhere.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): We are delighted that a distinguished expert from the Conference on

Disarmament in Geneva has come to preside over this session. Please accept our sincere congratulations, Mr. Chairman. At the same time, following a hallowed Asian tradition, I hope you will allow me to begin with an apology: I apologize if my remarks this morning come across as the views of an uninformed layman.

When we laymen feel a little lost in a new field, we sometimes turn to the time-honoured wisdom that is contained in old fables and fairy tales. Their very endurance over time suggests that an essential kernel of truth is contained in them. Take, for example, the story of the three little pigs. The first pig built a house of straw. Along came the wolf, and he huffed and he puffed and he blew the house down. The second pig built a house of wood. The wolf huffed and puffed and again blew down the house. The third pig built a house of bricks. This time, no matter how hard the wolf huffed and puffed, the house of bricks did not fall.

The moral of this tale is clear. There is safety in brick houses and solid defences. But this moral is, in some ways, at variance with the assumptions behind much of the work we do in the Committee. In this Committee we rarely counsel countries to build brick houses and solid defences. Instead, we generally ask them to disarm, brick by brick.

To avoid any misunderstanding, let me stress at the very outset that this remark should not be taken to mean that Singapore does not support disarmament efforts. We certainly do. Singapore is a very small State. In the animal kingdom, shrimp do not attack whales. Neither do small States pose any security threat to the rest of the world. All we crave is a peaceful and stable environment in which we can pursue national development and economic growth. This is why we support international disarmament efforts.

We have signed a number of important disarmament conventions, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions. We have been a strong supporter of nuclear disarmament. I am also pleased to inform the Committee today that Singapore will sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in early 1999. We participate regularly in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and we have sent an expert to participate in the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. Singapore has strict laws against the illicit ownership and transfer of arms and ammunition.

In addition to promoting disarmament, we promote peace. At the regional level, years of cooperation and confidence-building have resulted in a comfortable relationship among the countries of South-East Asia. Since the inception of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, there has not been any armed conflict between any two members of ASEAN. ASEAN countries have also signed a Treaty to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia, a Treaty that entered into force in 1997. ASEAN has also launched the ASEAN Regional Forum to promote peace and stability in the wider East Asian region. We will certainly continue with these efforts.

But even as we in the Committee rush to promote disarmament, we should balance it with a healthy respect for the realities of history. Even though the real wolves may be facing extinction in their natural environment, the metaphorical wolves continue to prowl through human societies all around the world, and they continue to prey on the weak and defenceless. Armed conflict is not likely to disappear soon. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said recently, Isaiah's words

> "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, …
> nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
> neither shall they learn war any more." *(The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4)*

will never be more than an ideal for humanity.

The first thought, therefore, that I would like to leave with this Committee is that, even as we promote disarmament here, we must ensure that the weak and defenceless, especially the small States, are not prematurely disarmed. Please allow us to build our brick houses first.

The second thought is a slightly paradoxical one. It is best captured in Max Weber's famous remark:

> "It is not true that good can only follow from good and evil from evil, but that often the opposite is true. Anyone who fails to see this is, indeed, a political infant."

Max Weber made this remark a long time before this Committee was created. But if he were alive today and watching the proceedings of this Committee, he might once again remind us to heed his remark. He could, for example, challenge a basic underlying premise of much of our work here: that the road to peace is paved with disarmament. As a scholar of Latin he could well have reminded us of the famous remark of Vegetius, a military strategist of the fourth century AD, who said, "He who desires peace should prepare for war".

It would, of course, have been politically incorrect for him to make such a remark in this Committee. But as a philosopher who studied human society by observing both words and deeds, Max Weber could have defended himself by pointing not to the words but to the deeds of the most advanced and sophisticated developed nations of our world today. Out of the total global military expenditure of $796 billion, North America alone accounts for 34 per cent, while the 14 European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) make up 23 per cent. By contrast, the 132 members of the Group of 77 contribute only 16 per cent to global military expenditure. By a strange and curious correlation, most of the developed countries are at peace and enjoying a previously unseen degree of peace and security, while most of today's conflicts occur in the developing world. Any objective social scientist might therefore conclude that there is an empirical correlation, not between peace and disarmament, but between peace and armament.

But as there are many historians in the room today, I am sure we would all agree that the real reasons why most developed nations are enjoying unprecedented peace are complex. Some continents have been exhausted by two World Wars. Others experienced peace for many years after the Second World War because of the so-called balance of terror. In another curious paradox of history, the biggest and most dangerous weapons ever produced by mankind — indeed, the only weapons that could destroy all mankind — have prevented a direct conflict between the two most militarily powerful nation States seen in the history of man. Of course, the successful economic development of many developed States, with the creation of large and broad bands of middle classes with a strong vested interest in peace, is another important explanation for peace in the developed world. And today, even as we speak, the enormous and relentless force of globalization — from which many of us feel otherwise threatened — may curiously be the most powerful force for producing global peace, because this force of globalization could shrink our world into a tiny little global village in which our interest in working together peacefully will grow by leaps and bounds.

It is clear, therefore, that the road to peace is a complex one, and it is these very complexities we should be promoting and discussing today. We live in a varied world where some live in brick houses, but where most live in straw homes or wooden huts. But in a curious reversal of the wisdom contained in the ancient fable, it is the citizens who live in brick houses who advise those living in straw homes and wooden homes to disarm.

Recent developments have shown us that we are still far from a world free of nuclear weapons. The nuclear-weapon States have continued to object to the elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. Recognizing that the major Powers will not surrender the nuclear option, disarmament activists have now turned their attention to other categories of conventional weapons, the "bows and arrows" that constitute the rudimentary defence of most countries. Layer by layer, these efforts could undermine the basic ability of States to defend themselves or to maintain domestic law and order.

Allow me to illustrate my point with another example. We all agree that deforestation has damaging effects on the environment. It removes the much-needed protective cover from the topsoil, leaving the earth susceptible to the forces of erosion. Disarmament, taken to the extreme, can have the same effect of depriving nations of their protective cover, leaving them vulnerable to the smallest forces of destruction. At what point does disarmament become a deforestation of national security?

We have absolutely no doubt that the non-governmental organizations that counsel such disarmament mean well. They mean to do good and not to do harm. They hope to save lives, not to destroy them. In many cases, their good intentions have produced good results. But as Max Weber reminded us a long time ago, this is not always the case.

We live in a complex world. Some of us live in safe neighbourhoods; many do not. Some of us are surrounded by equally peaceful neighbours. Singapore is lucky to be a member of the peaceful ASEAN community. Others live near wolves. It is for this reason that virtually all United Nations Member States, with the exception of a very few, maintain armed forces. The legitimate right to self-defence is set out in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

At the same time, there are very few safety nets in the contemporary world to protect those who live in wooden huts and straw homes. One of these safety nets is, of course, the United Nations Charter, as well as the United Nations organs that implement the provisions of the Charter. The higher the standing and effectiveness of the United Nations in the international community, the more protected the small States feel. Consequently, when either the United Nations Charter or the United Nations as an

Organization is weakened, the security of small States is naturally diminished.

Curiously, it is once again the citizens who live in brick houses today who are tearing holes in the safety net of the United Nations, either by damaging the prestige of the Organization or by not paying their dues to the United Nations. It is surely shocking that the wealthiest State of the world is unable to pay its dues to the United Nations. The results are clear. The United Nations has been weakened in recent years; so too has the safety net that protects small, weak States. I am not sure whether there are any wolves outside watching this process happen. If there are, they must surely be puzzled at the sight of small States being asked to disarm even as the fragile safety net protecting them is being torn.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that all of us in this room share the common goal of promoting peace or, to quote the opening words of the United Nations Charter, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Let us work together to find the best roads to reach this goal, but let us not assume that there are only simple direct paths to take. The search for peace, as both the lessons of history and the wisdom of fables have taught us, is elusive and complex. Let us not ignore these complexities in this Committee's deliberations and let us always ensure that, in the course of our work here, we enhance and do not diminish the security of small States.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): It is a pleasure to convey my warm congratulations to you, Sir, and to the other members of the Bureau for your outstanding election to guide the work of the Committee. In you, we recognize a seasoned diplomat whose long experience will guarantee the success of our work.

We also thank your predecessor, Ambassador Nkgowe of Botswana, for the remarkable manner in which he led the work of the First Committee at the past session. I also wish to thank Mr. Dhanapala for his laudable efforts at the head of the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat.

It is customary for us, when we meet each year, to strive to consolidate the success and achievements attained in the sphere of disarmament and to seek and clear the path for new specific achievements in this area, which affects not only the security and stability of States, but also human beings and their very existence, including their inner well-being.

Like many other countries, Tunisia is working to achieve the objective of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The international community assumed this goal several decades ago and the end of the cold war gave rise to a new world geopolitical environment conducive to its achievement. The important steps taken in the area of disarmament in the course of this decade confirm that trend. We wish specifically to recall the conclusion of the START I and START II treaties between the United States and Russia and, at the multilateral level, the conclusion and entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Certainly, the year that has elapsed since the last session of this Committee has seen positive developments. In the sphere of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, we note with satisfaction the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty for military usage. We hope that these negotiations will rapidly lead to the conclusion of a treaty to serve as a regime for nuclear non-proliferation and as a true instrument for promoting nuclear disarmament. We note with interest the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish its Ad Hoc Committee to draft a treaty on unconditional and binding security guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States. This arises in conjunction with the conclusion last December of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

However, this progress should not allow us to forget that a great deal remains to be done in order to attain the ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament. Among the most important tasks on the international community's agenda is nuclear disarmament. The General Assembly has called for this in its many annual resolutions on the issue, and also and most importantly in the Final Document of its first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The vast majority of non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly the non-aligned countries, have made numerous urgent appeals for nuclear disarmament, the last of which was recently launched from Durban, South Africa, by the heads of State and Government of those countries. In 1996, the International Court of Justice rendered its well-known Advisory Opinion concluding that the nuclear States have an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under international control. Other forums, such as the Canberra Commission, have emphasized the urgent need for nuclear disarmament.

A broad consensus is thus emerging with regard to the need for the total and definitive eradication of nuclear weapons. The end of the cold war made this goal more attainable to the international community, while the impetus arising from the new world environment of the 1990s offers us a valuable opportunity to move firmly towards genuine nuclear disarmament. The nuclear Powers are urged to react positively to all these appeals by promoting progress in nuclear disarmament, in conformity with the commitments they have undertaken in the context of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and of the decision on the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, adopted following the 1995 Conference of States Parties to the NPT.

In this context, we stress the importance of the nuclear Powers' pursuing determined efforts on the bilateral and multilateral levels, which are complementary, not antinomic. We encourage bilateral agreements in the area of nuclear disarmament, such as the START agreements between the United States and Russia. START II should be ratified and enter into force as soon as possible in order to open the way to the conclusion of START III and to allow for further reductions of strategic nuclear arsenals on the part of both the major nuclear Powers. We call open the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. It is urgent to make substantial progress towards world-wide nuclear disarmament, as recent events in South Asia have once again shown.

Regional nuclear disarmament is a key factor in consolidating international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts and also makes a considerable contribution to strengthening the foundations of regional peace and security. In that regard, my country has consistently supported efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. Tunisia has worked towards the establishment of denuclearized zones; it was among the first countries to sign the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and was pleased by the conclusion of the Bangkok Treaty establishing the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. We welcome the fact that these two zones follow upon previous nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the South Pacific.

Yet in the Middle East Israel continues to block attainment of the goal of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, in spite of the many appeals made not only by other States of the region but also by the General Assembly, which has adopted by consensus a number of resolutions on this matter, and in spite of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Today, despite the accession of other States of the region to the NPT, Israel remains outside the Treaty and refuses to accede to it. Israel continues to refuse to place its nuclear installations under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, thus posing a grave ongoing threat to the security of the countries and peoples of the region, and perpetuating a flagrant imbalance in its favour by being the sole possessor of a nuclear capacity beyond all international controls.

Turning to conventional weapons, Tunisia welcomes the conclusion last year at Ottawa of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This is an important disarmament instrument, which would eliminate an entire category of weapons that is notorious for its ravages among civilian populations. My country was among the first to sign the Convention at Ottawa, and is actively pursuing the ratification process. We hope to deposit our instrument of ratification soon, and we welcome the prospect of the Convention's entry into force next March.

The illicit trafficking in and circulation of small arms pose a threat to national and regional security and contributes to the destabilization of States. The efforts by States to combat this phenomenon must go hand in hand with determined action by the international community at large. My country supports the efforts of regional and international organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations. We consider that international action should be placed under United Nations auspices.

Tunisia has a special interest in the question of enlargement of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament. Tunisia is a peace-loving country that is a party to all the multilateral disarmament treaties and that is deeply committed to the cause of disarmament and to strengthening the foundations of international peace and security. It has aspired for years to membership of the Conference on Disarmament, the sole forum for negotiating multilateral disarmament treaties. We consider that all countries with a legitimate desire to join that body as full members, such as Tunisia, should have the opportunity to do so. This would further strengthen the representative nature and universality of the Conference, and we call on that body to continue its consultations with a view to adopting a decision on admitting five new members at its first meeting of 1999.

Strengthening the foundations of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region is a top priority to which Tunisia devotes tireless and constant effort. Tunisia embraces the universal values of democracy, tolerance and openness, which define the political and social system that governs our balanced, unified society and that inspires our foreign policy. We tenaciously play an active role in the Mediterranean region, and work with determination to strengthen the basis of a broad-based and multidimensional partnership between the two shores of the basin. While we favour the economic and social development of the southern shore, it is only partnership that can enable the entire region to address the common challenges facing it, such as terrorism and all other forms of extremism, organized crime, drug trafficking, illegal migration and many others. Such partnership must be built by all States of the Mediterranean basin together with the goal of lasting cooperation and security, which will turn this cradle of civilizations into a true lake of peace and prosperity. It is this comprehensive approach with its interwoven and interdependent elements that motivates my country's participation in the Euro-Mediterranean process and that will continue to guide our actions in the future.

I pledge my delegation's full readiness to cooperate with you, Sir, in ensuring the success of the work of the First Committee. As in other disarmament forums, Tunisia will persevere in its commitment to the cause of disarmament and to the building of a more secure world.

Mr. Botnaru (Republic of Moldova): Allow me, Sir, to associate myself with the congratulations already addressed to you on your election to the post of Chairman of the First Committee this year. I am confident that your leadership and wisdom will guide the Committee's work to a fruitful conclusion. I take this opportunity to assure you that my delegation will spare no effort in supporting you and in contributing to the work of the Committee.

In his statement at the opening of the general debate in the First Committee, the Secretary-General spoke of the connection between disarmament and development. We welcome that approach to disarmament issues. The Republic of Moldova, having passed through conflict and still facing the problems of the post-conflict period, has experienced the full truth of the fact that disarmament is essential for effective conflict-prevention and for post-conflict reconstruction, and that conflict is the greatest enemy of development everywhere. We have seen how even a small-arms race economically devastates the conflict area through the diversion of skills and resources from development. Hence, the principle of the connection between disarmament and development is applicable in cases of conflict, and is even more significant with respect to the nuclear arms race. That is why our common endeavours to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world should be strengthened and accelerated. Success in this field will liberate more human resources for tasks of progress and development, thus ensuring peace and security in the world.

In this regard, the international community should make every effort to maintain and further strengthen the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime by securing the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is also important that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) should enter into force at the earliest possible date.

My country cannot but share the concern that many representatives have expressed during this session of the First Committee that the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction continues to threaten regional and global security. At the same time, we welcome the pragmatic proposals made by several countries; these should help move the disarmament process forward. We support the view that the nuclear non-proliferation regime can be promoted only if associated with the promotion of nuclear disarmament. Those two regimes, non-proliferation and disarmament, should be implemented in parallel.

We believe that the step-by-step approach of taking concrete and realistic measures is the most balanced one for achieving positive results in this respect. At the same time, we consider that the disarmament process, in order to be effective, should include, in a comprehensive way, all types of weapons.

The Republic of Moldova welcomes the work under way in Vienna to make the verification regime completely functional as soon as the CTBT enters into force. The recent developments in South Asia related to the testing of nuclear arms indicate that these efforts are of major importance. We also share the view that the vitality of the NPT Treaty depends on the success of the new preparatory process for future NPT Review Conferences. These steps will ensure, in our view, the coherent and consistent application of the NPT regime's basic principles.

We believe that the nuclear-disarmament measures taken by Member States of their own initiative or collectively provide a conducive environment to further nuclear disarmament by others. We welcome these events. At the same time, we are of the view that all other steps that are not in line with such efforts are aimed at undermining the very foundation of the NPT and disarmament regime, regardless of what arguments are advanced.

Among the positive developments in the process of disarmament and international security, we are pleased to mention the fissile material cut-off treaty, which would make a significant contribution to both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We welcome the establishment last August of an Ad Hoc Committee entrusted with negotiations on this treaty within the Conference on Disarmament. This is important for ensuring the coherence of our efforts regarding the process. We consider that the control of fissile material by the international community will ensure the prevention of the further production of nuclear weapons. That is why it is so crucial to strengthen the NPT and adopt a fissile material cut-off treaty in order to move towards a reduction of nuclear weapons.

We call upon the nuclear-weapon States to make further concrete efforts to reduce their nuclear weapons with a view to achieving the ultimate goal of eliminating these arsenals. In this respect, we welcome both the recent progress made by the United States and Russia in nuclear disarmament and their commitment to move forward the START process.

We consider that regional and subregional initiatives should also be encouraged and run parallel to international efforts in achieving peace and security in the world. The expansion of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones and the consolidation of existing ones, for example, will contribute to the cause of nuclear non-proliferation.

Regarding chemical and biological weapons, we believe that full compliance of all States parties with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is indispensable for attaining the goals of these Conventions. We welcome the fact that the European Union has placed a high priority on the reinforcement of the Biological Weapons Convention, especially regarding a verification regime and its efforts to improve the effectiveness of both Conventions.

In 1992, the Republic of Moldova faced a humanitarian problem caused by the anti-personnel landmines used by the separatist regime in the eastern districts of the country. Moldova, as one of the States afflicted by landmines, understands the importance of efforts by the Ottawa agreement's supporters to eliminate anti-personnel landmines and the humanitarian crises they cause.

Our country looks forward to the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and to that of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and amended Protocol II. The Republic of Moldova also welcomes the initiative to conclude a treaty that prohibits the transfer of anti-personnel landmines. This treaty would be a realistic and significant measure.

Let me mention here that the Republic of Moldova has continued to fulfil its obligations as regards disarmament and the non-proliferation regime. Moldova has signed the NPT Treaty, the Ottawa Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and others. The Republic of Moldova, as a party to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), has carried out all of its obligations related to conventional weapons reduction and verification measures.

With the sporadic outbreak of local conflicts, the excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons has brought immeasurable social and economic dislocation. The illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons is seriously hampering efforts towards post-conflict peace-building. The illicit traffic in and proliferation of small arms constitutes a serious threat to the security and economic development of affected countries and regions. The link between criminal organizations and those dealing with illicit weapons is widely recognized.

The time has come for the international community to consider action-oriented recommendations to combat the problem. An international convention on the issue must commit States to adopt legal measures for the international control of small arms. During the conflict in the eastern districts of the Republic of Moldova, huge quantities of small arms and light weapons moved unchecked from the army's stockpiles into the hands of separatists. Even worse, a broad range of conventional weapons were transferred into their hands. As a result, paramilitary forces were formed in the eastern districts of the country.

In this regard, we welcome the initiatives of Member countries to move towards the establishment of international norms regarding the disarmament of paramilitary forces. We are ready to consider the elaboration of a draft resolution on this matter and will seek the support of the international community.

We wish to point out that it is mainly through the illicit transfer of arms that the separatist regime from the eastern districts of the country have come to be supported by a strong paramilitary force equipped with armaments from the stockpiles of foreign military forces, which are still located on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. This situation in the region is of great concern to us because the area controlled by the separatist regime is a zone of arms production and trafficking. The arms are produced by enterprises which were part of the industrial-military complex of the former Soviet Union, and they reach conflict zones in some third countries and support criminal structures.

In his statement during the general debate at the current session of the General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Moldova, Mr. Petru Lucinschi, said that

> "on 21 October 1994 the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation signed an agreement on the withdrawal of armaments and military personnel. Unfortunately the Russians have yet to ratify that agreement. Implementation of the agreement would be in line with the letter and the spirit of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, which stipulates the neutrality of our State and bans the deployment of foreign troops on our territory." *(A/53/PV.14, p.6)*

We consider also that the continuing presence of huge numbers of conventional foreign armaments on our soil contravenes the relevant CFE Treaty provisions. The decision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) summits in Budapest and Lisbon on an early and complete withdrawal and the position of the Council of Europe on this subject create the necessary international climate for the withdrawal of the foreign troops.

Another difficult problem which must be solved as a component part of the complete withdrawal of the foreign troops is the return of the armaments and equipment that are now in the possession of the paramilitary forces on the left Dniestr riverbank to their original location.

We consider the unchecked movement of armaments to separatist regimes, whatever the source of such movement, to be another type of arms proliferation that the international community should consider and call special body of United Nations experts to prepare an international conference on this issue. The task is to elaborate strategies aimed at preventing the proliferation of the supply, sale and transfer of small arms and conventional weapons, and particularly at limiting their flow to conflict areas. We believe that the time has come for the United Nations to include in its agenda for disarmament the issue of the proliferation of the transfer of supply of arms to conflict areas and to take appropriate action in order not to allow this type of proliferation to spread throughout the world.

Let me mention in conclusion that the people of the Republic of Moldova, as a part of the former Soviet Union, suffered enormous losses during the cold war because of the lack of progress in the disarmament process. That resulted in a huge waste of our resources and in a diversion from the task of development and of ensuring a better and more secure world for our children.

These days we are facing other challenges on the road to development, and among them is the challenge of the disequilibrium of development.

If during the cold war the divisions were dominated and maintained by the display of nuclear power, at the end of this millennium the divisions within the international community tend to be dominated by huge discrepancies in the level of economic development, which generate conflict and turmoil within the international community. That is a challenge that requires concrete action in order to ensure success. That is why it is so important to accelerate our efforts in the field of disarmament. The time has come to make substantial progress in the field of disarmament and international security so as to be able to concentrate more of our efforts on the task of development — a big challenge that we are facing on the eve of the new millennium.

Ms. Eshmambetova (Kyrgyzstan): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee and offers its full support to you during our work.

Despite the end of the cold war, the international community still faces a number of challenges as it looks to the new millennium. Widespread hunger and poverty, unemployment, illicit trafficking of drugs, arms smuggling, international terrorism and organized crime are causing social unrest and ethnic conflicts and threatening peace and stability in the world.

Against this background, nothing can justify the continued military spending around the globe, which further exacerbates tensions in various regions. As an Asian country, Kyrgyzstan was deeply disappointed by the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan, actions that fly in the face of the nearly global consensus against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is with great relief that we have taken note of the intentions of those countries to adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We also welcome the resumption of the India-Pakistan dialogue on the commencement of the fissile material cut-off negotiations, and we view that as a very positive development.

We urge those countries and those that are not members of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to sign and ratify the Treaty and join in the global effort to reduce and eliminate, in a step-by-step manner, under multilateral auspices, all nuclear weapons from our planet. My delegation also welcomes the unilateral and bilateral efforts of the nuclear-weapon States for the reduction of their arsenals: the Strategic Defence Review initiative of the United Kingdom and the agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation on the management and disposal of excessive supplies of plutonium. In our view, the entry into force of START II and the commencement of negotiations on START III could be another positive step in this direction.

The review conference of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the year 2000 will be a significant event and a historic benchmark in the field of nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we welcome the recent ratification of that Treaty by Australia, Austria, Brazil, France, Germany, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom and urge all States to pave the way for its entry into force and to ban for ever the human and environmental damage these weapons cause.

It is true that the dark mushroom clouds of India and Pakistan had a silver lining in the form of growing support for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). However, we would prefer to see a cloudless sky over our blue planet and to dream of the time when clouds could bring only rain, not radioactive fallout, and life, not death, to the earth. Although there is still no consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV, there seems to be more understanding on the necessity of a balance between nuclear disarmament, weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons and less argument about the holding of the special session being a luxury because of budgetary constraints.

The harmful effects of armed conflicts are not confined by national borders or limited to the parties directly involved in such conflicts. Rather, they spill over into the broader region and threaten to disrupt peaceful societies. In this regard, the proliferation of small arms is no less dangerous than the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Indeed, in some parts of the world, small arms have turned into weapons of mass destruction, in view of the enormous scale of human casualties among civilian populations. According to the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, 90 per cent of those killed or wounded by small arms are civilians, and 80 per cent of those are women and children. Therefore, my delegation supports the recommendations of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade and welcomes the proposal of Switzerland to host the conference in the year 2000. We also recognize the importance of the process started by the intergovernmental meeting on small arms in Oslo and commend the adoption in November 1997 by the Organization of American States of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

The Kyrgyz Republic seeks to promote all avenues for reducing conflict and promoting global peace and security. It realizes that economic development, not military spending, is the true measure of national achievement. Therefore, my country continues to actively participate in the efforts of the five Central Asian States to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region. In this regard, I wish to refer to the successful conclusion in July 1998 of the Consultative Meeting of Experts of the Central Asian States and the Nuclear-Weapon States, under United Nations auspices, to elaborate acceptable ways and means of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The meeting marked a new stage in the implementation of the Central Asian initiative in that it prepares the legal groundwork for the future treaty.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to express the sincere gratitude of my delegation to the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, and to the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for their continued support and assistance to the countries of the region in the preparation of the forms and elements of the agreement. My country is also very grateful for the support for the ongoing efforts expressed by many delegations during the discussions in the First Committee. We urge States in other regions to take similar initiatives towards regional confidence-building and eventual global nuclear disarmament as means of achieving the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is a great honour for me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee, and to congratulate the other members of the Bureau as well. It is also a great pleasure for me to recall the chairmanship of the Ambassador of Botswana during the previous session.

As the Secretary-General has said, the process of reforming the Organization requires disarmament to be considered a priority issue on the global agenda. In this context, we welcome the decision to re-establish the Department for Disarmament Affairs within the Secretariat and the appointment of Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala to direct it.

Peru has given its steadfast support to general and complete disarmament under strict international control as a central component of security and as a goal the international community must attain. We are convinced that the establishment of an international order in line with international law and based on respect for treaty commitments and the principles of the Charter of the Organization is the only way to achieve a world of peace and sustainable development.

Over the past few months certain serious events have occurred in the area of disarmament. In our view, the nuclear tests that were carried out had no valid justification. They have merely reaffirmed our earlier conviction that it is more indispensable today than ever before to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime as established in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

It is essential to curb nuclear proliferation and promote nuclear disarmament under strict international control if we are to achieve the universality of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is vital for the Organization to achieve the universality of that Treaty, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the full implementation in good faith of the commitments undertaken in article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In this context, we welcome in particular Brazil's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Our country rejects all types of nuclear tests anywhere in the world and believes that they constitute a threat to international peace and security. Peru shares the broad goals and plan of action set out in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) to deal with the threat of an arms race in South Asia.

In spite of the limited or even non-existent progress that has been made to date at the two meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we believe that efforts must be intensified to ensure that the Conference produces positive results and strengthens the non-proliferation regime to bring about the speedy nuclear disarmament that we all desire. Peru will continue to participate with determination, as it has always done, to reach these objectives.

Today the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that states that there exists an obligation on the part of all States to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control has more validity and urgency than ever.

We attach particular importance to all initiatives conducive to creating a climate of security, which is an indispensable condition for the achievement of sustainable peace and development.

We are prepared to support the initiative put forward by a group of friendly countries entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda".

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are a valuable tool in support of nuclear disarmament. Peru supports all efforts leading to the strengthening and expansion of these zones. In this connection, we support the initiative of the Central Asian countries to establish a new zone free of nuclear weapons, as well as Mongolia's own proposal. We believe that coordination between the Tlatelolco regime for Latin America and the Caribbean and the regimes of the Treaty of Rarotonga and its Protocols for the South Pacific, of the Pelindaba Treaty for Africa, of the Bangkok Treaty for South-East Asia and of the Antarctic Treaty will contribute to the development and consolidation of those regimes. In this regard, we would once again like to reiterate our support for the quest to make the southern hemisphere a zone free of nuclear weapons, which is gaining more and more momentum.

We should be encouraged by the considerable increase in the number of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction since it entered into force in April 1997. This is a reflection of the world's growing awareness with regard to the need to work together to ban these perverse weapons. We must continue to support the important work being carried out by the Organization created by the Convention. We encourage those States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention so that it can achieve the necessary universality to be fully effective.

We also share the view and position, held by a large number of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, that greater efforts should be made to conclude successfully and as soon as possible negotiations on a legally binding instrument to strengthen the effectiveness and implementation of the Convention.

Our country attaches special importance to the non-proliferation not only of weapons of mass destruction, but also of those with indiscriminate effects. That is why we participated actively in the Ottawa process, which in December 1997 culminated in the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In June of this year we deposited our instrument of ratification, thereby reaffirming our international position in favour of specific disarmament measures that contain a sizeable humanitarian component. Peru associates itself with the many expressions of satisfaction that have been heard from a majority of the world's Governments, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and various international humanitarian organizations regarding the forthcoming entry into force of the Convention. We believe that this is a clear sign of positive change in the international arena. We call for a similar commitment from all Member States of the Organization in this regard. In addition, we will co-sponsor with Canada and numerous countries from various regions a draft resolution to be introduced in the Committee in the coming days that will urge all States to sign and ratify the Convention and thereby achieve its early universal implementation. We also pledge our efforts to see to it that the first meeting of States parties, which will be held in Maputo, Mozambique, will consolidate the progress that has been made in this area and serve to strengthen its future implementation.

Small arms and light weapons, because they are inexpensive, easy to carry, use and maintain, used indiscriminately and often obtained illegally, promote an increase in the level of violence among criminal organizations within countries, place at risk internal, regional and subregional security and threaten the right of peoples to live in peace. One need only bear in mind the information provided both by the Secretary-General and by various organizations showing that the majority of victims of today's internal conflicts are civilians and that their injuries are caused by these types of weapons. This is why Peru considers it necessary for all States — in particular those that produce, export or import small weapons, munitions, explosives and other related materials — to publicly report on the measures that they are taking or should adopt to prevent, combat and eradicate the illegal trafficking in these weapons.

Peru took part in a seminar that was held recently on this subject. In this connection, I would like to emphasize that it is also urgent and indispensable to have a system of cooperation in the area of intelligence — not just among States but also through agreements with specialized institutions — to make possible the detection of unlawful trafficking in these weapons. For its part, our country has adopted internal legislation aimed at dealing with this problem. At the same time, we have worked on a model set of regulations to control international trafficking in firearms, spare parts and ammunition, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States last June. Likewise, in 1997 Peru signed the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials and is now carrying out the appropriate internal procedures to ratify it. We believe that this document can serve as a model for the drafting of an international instrument along these lines, preferably within the framework of the United Nations. We support the initiative by the Secretary-General to convene an international conference on this subject. To this end, we pledge our active and constructive support.

Peru was one of the first countries to strictly comply with the requirement to provide information to the Register of Conventional Arms. We believe the Register is a very valuable instrument for promoting mutual confidence and arms control. However, for it to be truly effective, countries must provide, in timely and continuous fashion, the information required by the Register.

There will be no peace or international security if we ignore social, economic, humanitarian and environmental issues. For this reason, any action aimed at disarmament must take into account the economic and social development of all the peoples of the world. The resources freed up by disarmament must be used for the development of peoples.

Present developments in the area of regional and global security show that there is a need to strengthen United Nations machinery through a new, revitalized approach linking peace, disarmament and economic and social development. A multilateral approach is the best way to ensure certain and reliable progress.

For all this to happen with the necessary efficiency, there must be a clear, operative link between the United Nations efforts and those of individual regions. It is not possible to get everything done from Headquarters in New York. That is why we believe that the Regional Centres must be the principal actors in this process. In the case of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development located in Peru, its work could be brought into line with today's needs, academic and governmental interaction could be actively promoted through information exchange, currents of opinion could be generated, regional and international agreements could be consolidated, conflicts could be prevented and, in general, peace, disarmament and development could be promoted. The Regional Centre in Peru can do this job, and we believe it can do it without unduly burdening the United Nations.

The declaration by the heads of State at the recent summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Durban, South Africa, and the decision of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly to maintain and revitalize the Regional Centres encourage us to continue with the efforts we have been making to revitalize the Regional Centre headquartered in Lima. We are confident that the Centre will soon resume its work.

The Chairman: I note that disarmament fellows are with us today in the framework of their fellowship programme in New York. On behalf of the First Committee, I would like to extend a warm welcome to them and wish their programme great success during this session of the General Assembly.

I now give the floor to Mr. Patrick Zahnd, the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Zahnd (International Committee of the Red Cross): The year 1998 has witnessed several important landmarks in the development of international humanitarian law governing specific weapons.

On 30 July, Protocol IV of the 1981 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), prohibiting both the use and transfer of blinding laser weapons came into force. Thirty States are now party to this new instrument, and their number is steadily increasing. For the first time since 1868, an abhorrent weapon has been prohibited before being used on the battlefield. It is also the first time that the transfer of a weapon has been prohibited together with its use. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) urges States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to this important instrument and to ensure that blinding laser weapons are neither produced nor made available. We also encourage States to declare, upon ratification, their understanding that the provisions of this Protocol shall apply in all circumstances.

The date 3 December this year will mark the entry into force of Protocol II of the CCW, as amended. This instrument strengthens restrictions on the use of landmines, booby traps and similar devices. These restrictions apply equally to parties to non-international armed conflicts. The ICRC considers these new norms to be the absolute minimum rules to be observed by those States that consider the continued use of anti-personnel mines to be indispensable. The Protocol's rules regarding the use of anti-vehicle mines, the indiscriminate use of which recently cost the life of a doctor working with the ICRC and injured three other staff in Kosovo, should also be strictly observed and, in due course, strengthened. We urge the States that negotiated this new instrument and have still not ratified it to do so urgently, in order to join the existing 25 States parties as full participants in next year's first conference of high contracting parties.

The achievement of the 40 ratifications required for entry into force of the Ottawa treaty on 16 September, less than 10 months after its signature, was an extraordinary accomplishment. To our knowledge, this is the earliest that any arms-related treaty has achieved so large a number of ratifications. This accomplishment reflects the high-priority and sense of urgency with which most States have responded to the global scourge of anti-personnel mines. The Ottawa treaty contains not only the absolute prohibition of anti-personnel mines, but active obligations to eliminate this weapon and assist its victims. The ICRC therefore considers this instrument to be the comprehensive solution to the immense suffering caused by this weapon. Because this treaty is a direct response to an ongoing humanitarian crisis we call first and foremost on the 86 Governments that have signed but not yet ratified it to give high priority to becoming parties to it before its entry into force on 1 March 1999.

As States begin to adjust their arsenals to ensure compliance with these new international instruments, we would like to highlight the need to ensure that anti-vehicle mines be designed not to detonate upon the innocent passage of a person or inadvertent contact with the mine. This concern relates both to the design of anti-handling mechanisms and trigger mechanisms for anti-vehicle mines. The ICRC plans to address these subjects in detail at the 1999 meetings of States parties to the Ottawa Treaty and Protocol II.

While the Ottawa Treaty is a prescription for ending the landmine crisis, its implementation is the cure. The application in the field of the provisions of this instrument must figure among the highest humanitarian priorities for the coming years. This will require a tremendous long-term mobilization of resources and considerable organization.

The ICRC stands ready to advise States on ways to adapt national legislation for its implementation and to provide examples of existing legislation. To this end, ICRC ratification kits in all official United Nations languages, for both Protocol II and the Ottawa treaty, are available.

We welcome the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service to promote a coordinated international approach. However, we are increasingly concerned with the number of efforts at international coordination and data collection that have not yet resulted in new activities in mine-affected communities. This year, a variety of existing and credible mine-clearance agencies have experienced funding problems which urgently need to be addressed. The ICRC is grateful for the generous response to its 1998 appeal for victim assistance. Together with our partners in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, we will be developing a long-term strategy on landmines, with an emphasis on victim assistance, to be adopted next year.

In their work for war victims, ICRC delegates are witness to the increasingly devastating effects on civilian populations of the proliferation of weapons, particularly small, military-style arms. The combination of inadequate controls on the transfer of such arms and their frequent use in violation of the basic norms of international humanitarian law threaten to undermine international legal norms relative to the protection of civilians from suffering and abuse in combat situations.

Civilian populations have paid an appalling price for the wide-spread availability of arms and ammunition in recent conflicts. Disease, starvation and abuse increase when humanitarian organizations are directly attacked and must suspend operations or even leave a country. Civilian casualties greatly outnumber those of combatants in most, if not all, internal and ethnic conflicts. Suffering may continue for years after the end of a conflict as the availability of arms engenders a culture of violence which undermines the rule of law and threatens efforts at reconciliation.

The ICRC is gravely concerned that efforts to protect and assist war victims are being undermined by the flow of weapons. While we recognize that the primary responsibility for compliance with international humanitarian law falls upon users of arms, States engaged in their production and export bear some responsibility to the international community for the use made of their weapons and ammunition. We encourage States urgently to consider the elaboration of rules, based on humanitarian law and other criteria, governing the transfer of military-style arms and ammunition and to find the means to bring the flows of such weapons within specific countries and regions under effective control.

As requested in 1995 by the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the ICRC expects to publish in early 1999 a study on the extent to which the availability of weapons contributes to violations of international humanitarian law and the deterioration of the situation of civilians. This study will be on the agenda of the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in November 1999.

The ICRC considers the 1868 St. Petersburg Declaration, renouncing the use of exploding bullets, to be a cornerstone of efforts to protect soldiers from superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering. It is disturbing to learn that some armed forces are considering the use of bullets which will explode on impact with soft targets. The ICRC calls on all States rigorously to review, in accordance with article 36 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I, their procurement policies.

Biological and chemical weapons should rapidly become relics of the past thanks to the 1972 and 1993 Conventions, which totally prohibit this horrific means of warfare. However, vigilance and determination will be required to ensure that these evil genies remain in their bottle. Rapid developments in the fields of microbiology, genetic engineering and biotechnology demonstrate the need for transparency and strict national and international oversight to ensure that developments which could benefit humanity are not turned against it. We urge the conclusion in 1999 of negotiations on a monitoring regime for the Biological Weapons Convention. We also call upon States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to ensure that the verification practices developed within the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as well as interpretations of obligations developed, fully reflect the far-reaching commitments to openness and cooperation which are contained in that important Convention.

Since the beginning of the year, three new instruments of international humanitarian law have achieved the threshold needed to trigger their entry into force, evidence of the dynamic nature and relevance of the laws of war. The task now at hand is to ensure that these norms are rapidly universalized and faithfully implemented. The relief and prevention of enormous human suffering depend on these next steps.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is Mr. José Mauricio Bustani, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The mere fact that today, in 1998, we can welcome Mr. Bustani testifies to the important success of the international community, especially the Conference on Disarmament. The effective implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction is a complex task and a heavy responsibility entrusted to that organization, and to Mr. Bustani in particular. It is therefore with special pleasure that I call on him.

Mr. Bustani (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): When I last had the honour to address the First Committee one year ago, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was only a few months old. Even at that early point in the life of the organization, however, I was able to report that things had gotten off to a sound and successful start. Many of the required declarations had been received and the programme of initial inspections of declared facilities related to the production, storage or destruction of chemical weapons was already well under way. It may be recalled, however, that my greatest preoccupation at that time was the absence of the Russian Federation from the membership of the OPCW. The active participation of the Russian Federation, a permanent member of the Security Council and the largest known possessor of chemical weapons, was without question an essential prerequisite for the long-term success of the Convention. Shortly after my statement to the First Committee — one that may have been a cause of concern to some of its members — the Russian Federation, on 5 November 1997, was able to conclude its ratification process and became a State party one month later.

The Russian Federation's initial declaration was received on 3 January 1998, within the required 30-day time-line. By August of this year, the initial inspections of all 24 chemical-weapons production facilities and all seven chemical-weapons storage facilities declared by the Russian Federation had been completed. The level of cooperation shown by the Russian Federation with OPCW inspection teams and by its officials in respect to the required follow-up procedures has been exemplary.

The completion of the initial inspection of the Russian chemical-weapons-related facilities brought the total number of chemical weapons production facilities declared and inspected in all member States to 59. Of these, 10 have so far been certified as completely destroyed. A further 10 to 12 are likely to be granted destruction certificates within the next 12 months. Requests for the conversion of chemical weapons production facilities to peaceful purposes, as foreseen by the Convention, have been considered and endorsed by the Conference of the States Parties for two chemical weapons production facilities in two States parties. The remaining 35 facilities are either subject to conversion requests, again for peaceful purposes, or will be destroyed within the 10-year time-line set down in the Convention. Regular inspection of these remaining facilities will, of course, continue either until they are destroyed or, in the case of converted facilities, until the Conference of the States Parties determines otherwise.

The total number of chemical weapons storage facilities declared and which have received their initial inspection is 34. During this process, OPCW inspection teams have counted and checked more than 8 million chemical munitions and more than 25,000 bulk chemical agent containers. In addition, OPCW inspectors have visited 27 sites declared as holding old or abandoned chemical weapons in eight States parties.

At this point in time, the United States of America, because it began destruction activities of its own volition prior to the entry into force of the Convention, is the only State party which has been able to launch and sustain a programme for the elimination of its stockpile of chemical weapons. It is anticipated that the other States parties with chemical weapons stockpiles will follow suit shortly. In the Organization's first 17 months, its inspectors have spent the equivalent of more than 13,000 days monitoring the destruction of chemical weapons at destruction facilities in the United States of America only. During this period they have witnessed the destruction of almost 200,000 chemical munitions and close to 2,000 tonnes of chemical agent. Whilst this is an impressive number, it must be remembered that more than 8 million chemical munitions have been declared world-wide, all of which must be destroyed by the year 2007 if we are to meet the time-line set down in the Convention.

The deadline set by the Convention for the beginning of the mandatory destruction of chemical weapons in all other possessor States, two years from the entry into force of the Convention, is rapidly approaching. The OPCW is in fact already undertaking a preliminary review of several destruction plans submitted by those States parties. We must not forget that the destruction of chemical weapons is an extremely complex and expensive operation.

This brings me back to another subject which I raised in my statement last year, namely the need for greater international assistance for the Russian Federation in this particular area, especially now that that country, a State party and a major possessor of chemical weapons, is confronting a severe economic and financial crisis. During the negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, it was particularly difficult to gain acceptance for the idea of subjecting commercial chemical industry facilities both to declaration and to inspection by international inspectors in order to reassure States parties that such facilities were not being misused for purposes contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention. The requirement to balance the need for transparency and confidence-building measures and for effective verification with the need to protect confidential commercial information had a major impact on the negotiation of the Convention. Over the past decade attempts to reconcile these sometimes conflicting requirements have consumed an enormous amount of time, energy and ingenuity. I must stress, however, that the chemical industry itself was quick to see the potential benefits of receiving a clean bill of health from the OPCW and rapidly became a strong supporter of the Convention.

As is often the case, reality has been unwilling to conform to the expectations which those who were involved in the negotiation process had of it. The truth is that inspections of declared industry facilities now proceed at a steady pace and in a quiet and efficient manner, and that initial apprehension has given way to increasing mutual confidence. These inspections are being conducted at the rate of two or three per week, and to date about 100 industrial facilities have been inspected in 25 States parties. The level of cooperation extended to our inspectors by inspected States parties has been extremely high. Both sides have learned much during the last 18 months.

Slowly but steadily, we are making progress in the implementation of other important areas of the Convention, including international cooperation and assistance. I believe that we are beginning to overcome the initial climate of suspicion which had characterized debate in this area and which could well have led to a rift between developed and developing States parties to the Convention, thus eroding the basis for globalizing political support for its verification regime. We are now coming closer to the realization that a number of useful programmes that would benefit the organization and many of its individual member States on both sides of this potential divide can be both identified and implemented.

In relation to the right of States parties under article X of the Convention to request assistance in the event of the threat of use or the actual use of chemical weapons against them, a voluntary fund for such assistance has been established, and its assets currently amount to just under $500,000. An electronic data bank which contains information concerning various means of protection against chemical weapons has also been established, and further information is being added to it as it is received. States parties are being actively encouraged to provide the required data on their national programmes for protection against chemical weapons.

The first workshop addressing the various aspects of the coordination of assistance in the event of a chemical weapons attack against a State party, including the difficult questions of logistics and transportation, was recently held in Sofia, with the assistance of the Bulgarian Government. The first training course on protection against chemical weapons and the use of protective equipment will be held in Switzerland next month. The course, which is being provided by the Government of Switzerland as part of its contribution under article X, will aim to train 40 instructors, from various Member States, in the civil aspects of protection against chemical weapons and their detection and decontamination. It is already heavily oversubscribed, and we will need to run another in 1999.

The provision of administrative and technical support to States parties, in the form of training and advice, has become an important task of the OPCW. Since the entry into force of the Convention, the OPCW has organized four training courses for more than 120 personnel from States parties: one in Zimbabwe and three in the Netherlands. The main emphasis of these courses has been on the more practical aspects of implementing the Convention, such as the setting up of a national authority, the preparation of the required declarations, and the escorting of OPCW inspection teams. These courses have proved to be extremely valuable for the participating personnel from States parties.

The secretariat has also established a free information service for member States. The service provides information on topics related to the properties of dangerous chemicals, as well as on suppliers and producers of chemicals and chemical technology. The OPCW internship programme is being set up to help scientists and engineers from developing countries or countries with economies in transition to gain experience by working for a period of time at an advanced research institution. The main objective of this programme is to help establish links and joint research programmes between research groups in developing and industrialized countries. The OPCW will also fund small, science-based technical assistance projects in member States, whose goal is sustainable development while also maintaining national development goals. Details of all these programmes related to international cooperation and assistance may be found on the Organization's Internet Web site (http://www.opcw.nl/ptshome.htm).

It must be remembered, however, that a key component of the Convention is its article XI, designed to foster, for legitimate commercial and humanitarian purposes, free trade in chemicals between States parties. The Convention has now been in force for one and a half years, and the majority of States parties have already demonstrated, or are in the process of demonstrating, their compliance with its articles. The time has perhaps come, therefore, for those States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention which also participate in the Australia Group, and which have not already done so, to launch a review of their policies on export controls in the chemical area, as required under article XI of the Convention, and to report the results of this review to the OPCW. I do not underestimate the difficulties in taking such a step, but by doing this the States parties concerned will demonstrate their full commitment to their obligations under the Convention and thus further strengthen its effectiveness. Furthermore, a move in this area, at this time, will do much to encourage universal adherence to the Convention, perhaps more than any other action which States parties might take, individually or collectively. Universal adherence to the Convention by all countries in the world is after all the most important task on the route towards the ultimate goal of our organization. Only when universality has been achieved will it be possible not merely to imagine, but to realize a world free from chemical weapons.

One year ago, when I last addressed this body, the number of States parties to the Convention was 100, a truly impressive achievement for a Convention which had entered into force only six months before that date. Despite this impressive start, the ranks of our members did not, however, include a number of important countries. The encouragement at every opportunity of those countries that have yet to join the fold has been, and continues to be, a critically important area of OPCW's work.

Progress continues to be made. During the last 12 months another 20 countries have either ratified or acceded to the Convention, bringing our current membership, with Ukraine last week, to 120.

The Governments of several additional States have indicated that it is their intention either to ratify or accede before the end of the year. Much, however, has yet to be done. A number of factors, including the continuing financial crisis in South-East Asia, for example, have complicated the ratification process in several key States in that region, such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. I am assured by the Governments of those States, however, that they remain committed to the object and purpose of the Convention and that the internal legislative process necessary for ratification is proceeding despite their current problems.

Another key country in the Asian region is, of course, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Despite our best efforts, I must admit that we have not yet been successful in our attempts to establish effective communication with its Government and to begin a dialogue on the importance of that country's accession to the Convention. Needless to say, these efforts will continue in the future. I am also grateful for the support provided by the People's Republic of China for our endeavours in this area.

A blank spot on our map is central and southern Africa. While a number of African States have joined during the last 12 months, only 29 out of the 53 African States are parties to the Convention. Considerable efforts have been made to ensure that the Governments of these States are informed of the importance of the treaty as well as of the potential benefits that may be derived from membership of the OPCW. Research has shown that while most of these States may not have any significant chemical industry, they nevertheless do import, for legitimate commercial purposes, small quantities of these chemicals, which are listed in, and therefore controlled by, the Convention. If they do not accede to the Convention, their ability to acquire such chemicals in the future will be severely hampered by the export controls imposed by the Convention on trade in these chemicals with States not parties to the Convention.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is another complex problem, but one for which, I believe, with some imagination a solution may be found. For those uncomfortable with this country's becoming a member State, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the OPCW is a new international organization, that joining the Chemical Weapons Convention means accepting important restrictions backed by an intrusive verification regime, and last but not least that we are dealing with a region of the world that continues to be a source of increasing apprehension to the international community.

Another area of serious concern to the organization in relation to the issue of universal adherence is the Middle East, where a number of key States have yet to ratify or accede to the Convention. This situation is all the more worrying since the Middle East is, after all, the region which saw the last large-scale use of these terrible weapons. Suspicion has also been expressed that a number of the countries in this region either possess chemical weapons or have engaged in programmes to develop them. The quickest way to disprove such suspicions is for all States in the region to join the Convention as soon as possible, thus contributing to our goal of the total elimination of chemical weapons.

Israel is a signatory State to the Convention and, in this capacity, participated actively and fully in the work of the Preparatory Commission for the OPCW. I understand that Israel was then able to ensure that its important security concerns in relation to the implementation of the verification regime of the Convention was satisfactorily addressed. I hope that it will now be possible for that country to take the final step and shortly to deposit its instrument of ratification of the Convention with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Such a step would, among things, further demonstrate its commitment to lasting peace and security in the Middle East, particularly at a time when another major initiative aimed at finding a comprehensive solution for that region is under way.

My plea, and sincere advice, to Israel's neighbours is to consider the advantages — in terms of security, economic development and political standing — of following the example of the Kingdom of Jordan, which elected to follow those Middle Eastern States which had already ratified the Convention at its entry into force. By so doing, those States have demonstrated their abhorrence of chemical weapons, their commitment to their global elimination and also removed any possible suspicion of their having developed any chemical-weapon capability. I hereby appeal to Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Syria and Yemen to follow this courageous example. There is indeed a special opportunity here for Egypt — as one of the forward-looking nations in the region and one with a strong and respected record in the field of disarmament — to once again demonstrate its leadership role by acceding to the Convention.

Last, but not least, one might ask why Iraq should not also follow suit. After all, Security Council resolution 687 (1991), in its eighth, ninth and fourteenth preambular paragraphs and in its operative paragraph 7 — urges that country to accede to all existing instruments related to the banning of weapons of mass destruction. Accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, even though it postdates Security Council resolution 687 (1991), was clearly foreseen by the drafters of these paragraphs.

If by chance any of these States has something to declare, let it follow the example set by those that have already taken the brave step of joining the Convention as possessors of chemical weapons. Each State that takes such a step not only contributes towards building confidence in its region but also becomes an important actor in the effective implementation of this pioneering Convention and in the establishment of a safer world.

I am, of course, determined to continue my efforts to achieve universal adherence to this Convention, and I hope that in 1999 it will be possible to report major achievements in this area. At the same time, I have to ask those member States of the OPCW which maintain a fluid dialogue with non-member States to step up their efforts to persuade these countries of the benefits, not only to mankind as a whole, but also to themselves, of joining this Convention.

Our Convention — the Chemical Weapons Convention — is a unique multilateral instrument. It has three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and international cooperation in the peaceful use of chemistry.

I have spoken much about the successful implementation of this Convention, and I wish once more to emphasize that so far it has, indeed, been a great success. This is particularly true in relation to the disarmament pillar of the Convention. Nevertheless, I must warn the Committee that storm clouds are on the horizon. The well-being of the non-proliferation pillar of the Convention's verification regime depends to a large degree on the support of the major chemical industries of the world. I know for a fact that this support exists, and it is founded on the following two key understandings: first, that the respective Governments and the organization would ensure the adequate protection of any confidential business information whose disclosure is necessary to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of the Convention; and, secondly, that a level playing field would be established as far as the chemical industry is concerned, in accordance with which the burdens imposed by the Convention would fall equitably on the chemical industries of all States parties.

Feedback from the chemical industry suggests that, to date, the first of these concerns has largely been met. The second concern, however, has not. The failure of the United States of America, the Member State with the largest chemical industry in the world, to submit declarations with respect to its chemical industry, under article VI of the Convention, and to subject its chemical industry to inspections has already created a severe imbalance within the treaty regime. Such an imbalance may, if not addressed urgently, strike a fatal blow to the Convention. Indeed, the chemical industries of Europe and Japan, which are complying fully and in an exemplary manner with the provisions of the Convention, and which are being inspected on a regular — almost weekly — basis, are becoming increasingly concerned at what they see as an unfair commercial advantage being given to the chemical industry in the United States of America. Their Governments are therefore coming under growing pressure to request a scaling down of inspections of their respective chemical industries, a scenario which the drafters of the Convention certainly never envisaged.

We all know that this situation has been caused by the fact that the implementing legislation of the United States has not yet been adopted, and the United States Administration is at least as unhappy about it as the rest of us are. Even as I speak, those who support the legislation, in particular the United States chemical industry, are pressing hard to get the bill passed through the House of Representatives tomorrow, in the dying hours of this session of Congress. I appeal to the legislature of the United States of America to live up to the expectations of us all by adopting, tomorrow, 20 October 1998, this vital legislation, thereby allowing the United States of America to fulfil its leadership role in the implementation of our Convention.

It is no less important that the legislation adopted be in concert with all of the obligations the United States of America undertook when it ratified the Convention, in particular in relation to the challenge inspection regime, a United States creation, which is at the heart of the novel verification regime developed therein. As Secretary of State Madeleine Albright herself remarked with regard to the implementing legislation when emphasizing the benefits and importance of the Convention, in her 10 June statement to the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C.,

> "While moving forward with it, Congress should not at the same time move backward by adding provisions that are not consistent with the Convention and would diminish its effectiveness."

It is also important that the small number of States parties that have yet to provide their initial declarations do so without delay. The Islamic Republic of Iran, which, since ratifying the Convention at the end of 1997, has played a particularly active and valuable role in the Conference of the States Parties and, more recently, has also done so as a member of the Executive Council and as a facilitator for the resolution of critical issues left over from the Preparatory Commission, is among this group. I am sure, however, that Iran will live up to its promise to provide its initial declaration prior to the third Conference of the States Parties, which is scheduled to take place next month.

Other clouds on the horizon relate to some extent to the very success of the OPCW at such an early stage in its life. Some States parties seem uncomfortable with the rapid rate of activation of the organization and with the unavoidable emergence of its political role, and that of its Director-General, on the world scene. I know that it is not easy to come to terms with the fact that an international agreement on disarmament and non-proliferation, fast moving towards universality, can work and is working. That is understandable. On a lighter note, even the procedures and practices of this body include no provisions to distinguish between the chief executive officer of an international organization and any other representative when inviting them to speak to the Committees. But I am certain that the winds of reform and modernization within the United Nations will soon recognize that the Director-

General of an organization such as the OPCW — now the only fully fledged independent in the field covered by this Committee — should address the Committee from a different place.

It required a lot of political courage and trust on the part of the States to finalize the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is time now for the States parties to exhibit the same political courage and trust in assisting the OPCW to move from its adolescent phase into full adulthood. As the first Director-General of the OPCW, I truly need all the political support that members can offer me. Those who have given birth to the baby, must, like all parents, accept that it will grow into adulthood and will inevitably develop a life of its own.

I have touched upon only a few of the issues which at the present juncture appear to be of importance to the work of the OPCW. This statement has been an account of achievements and difficulties. One thing, however, is clear: the OPCW is earning its place in the system of international security. If properly nurtured, it will become a mature, cost-effective, global instrument to eliminate the scourge of chemical weapons from the planet for a very modest budget: $70 million — the cost of two modern fighter jets each year. But at the end of the day, the organization can never be better, more effective or more exemplary than its member States want it to be. We need the sustained political support of all States parties to the Convention if we are to flourish. I am convinced that the Chemical Weapons Convention serves our political, security, and economic interests, while at one and the same time benefiting and advancing the cause of international disarmament.

The Chairman: The First Committee can only rejoice at the success of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We can only hope also that the remaining problems will be resolved as soon as possible.

I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Bustani for his comprehensive statement. Regarding the reference he made to my country, I would like to say that, due to the efforts made by our national authority, our declarations are ready and will be submitted to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) very soon. It is our earnest hope that all the provisions of this very important Convention will be implemented in a non-discriminatory manner by all Member States and that the OPCW will be able to resolve outstanding issues, including those relating to article XI, in a satisfactory manner as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations

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General Assembly

Fifty-third Session

First Committee

10th Meeting
Tuesday, 20 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Please accept, Mr. Chairman, the congratulations of the delegation of Chile on your election to guide the work of the First Committee. We are familiar with your professional skills and your mastery of the issues of disarmament and security, and accordingly we are sure that under your wise leadership our work will result in success.

Our country is committed to the important work the Conference on Disarmament is called upon to perform as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. It is for this reason that, after more than a year of deadlock, we are pleased at the impetus given to its work by the decision to establish the ad hoc committee to negotiate a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices.

Nevertheless, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament has not yet made any substantive progress in relation to nuclear disarmament as such, and we therefore feel it is important to reiterate the continuing and acknowledged priority of this issue, which makes it necessary that it receive appropriate consideration in that multilateral negotiating forum. It is for this reason that we emphasize once again the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which stressed the obligation to initiate and conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. Chile must emphasize that it will continue to promote a gradual and realistic approach to this issue, free from preconditions or a priori compulsory deadlines, which would only delay the attainment of our real objective.

Accordingly, we have taken note of the declaration made by a group of countries last June entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", and we appreciate their desire to contribute to overcoming extreme positions in the sphere of nuclear disarmament.

Once again, Chile deeply regrets the nuclear tests in South Asia, as it has repeatedly stated on previous occasions as a matter of principle. This unfortunate situation has underlined the urgent need to strengthen the validity and universality of instruments such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and has made it clear that as long as there is no progress on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, it will be more difficult to defend the edifice of non-proliferation.

These developments, as well as all of the recent events in the nuclear sphere, make it clear how essential it is for international peace and security to maintain and strengthen, in a legally binding manner, the international non-proliferation regime. Accordingly, we regret the disappointing results of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. There can be no doubt that the international community as a whole must resolutely and urgently assume its responsibility for the eradication and prevention of the threat of nuclear proliferation. For this reason, we renew

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our appeal to all States to sign and ratify the international instruments designed to eliminate the nuclear threat. We therefore welcome Brazil's recent accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Chile also supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely entered into by the countries concerned, as well as the strengthening of those zones that already exist. We invite all States, and particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to continue along the road marked out by Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok.

We believe that it is essential that we strive to develop and improve new instruments to regulate the manufacture, trade and use of conventional weapons. In this context, the Government of Chile welcomes the forthcoming entry into force, with the completion of the first 40 ratifications, of the Convention on the elimination of anti-personnel landmines, and Chile hopes to complete its process of legislative approval so that it will be able to ratify this important instrument.

We also support the initiatives designed to achieve greater transparency in armaments, in particular the application of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and of military expenditures, the provisions of which we comply with on a regular basis.

In our region, and in the context of confidence-building measures, Chile since last year been publishing a "defence book" which has become a tangible indication of the implementation of our policy of transparency in this respect.

In this regard, committed to the spirit of transparency adopted in the context of the two regional conferences of the Organization of American States on confidence-building measures, held in Santiago in 1995 and San Salvador in 1998, as well as in the Plan of Action of the second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago in April this year, we urge all the countries of our region to make progress in the explicit formulation of their defence policies.

We also wish to stress on this occasion, because of the special importance we attach to it, the political declaration adopted by Chile together with the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries at the presidential summit held in July this year in Ushuaia, Argentina, which established a zone of peace free from weapons of mass destruction and reaffirmed the will of the six participating countries to continue advancing along the road of cooperation with respect to all security issues.

We are greatly pleased by the decision taken by our Organization to maintain and revitalize the regional centres for peace and disarmament, particularly the Regional Centre in Lima, Peru. In this same context, we strongly support the activities of Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in Geneva, which through its extensive and in-depth studies and analyses has become an important tool for the attainment of our objectives.

Chile is a full party to the Convention on Biological Weapons, and since 1995 has been participating actively in the ad hoc group whose mandate is to conclude a protocol to improve the Convention by incorporating into it a verification regime and specific measures for cooperation in the field of biotechnology. Accordingly, we reiterate the priority we attach to strengthening the Convention, and in particular to the speedy conclusion of the negotiations being carried out for the establishment of that regime. It was for these reasons that in June this year, together with other countries of our region, we adopted a joint declaration urging the activation of these negotiations, and last 23 September we joined 57 other States in a declaration for the purpose of providing the necessary political backing for the work of the ad hoc group.

We also wish to stress that Chile is committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention and its Organization. Accordingly, we have adjusted our domestic legislation and established the national authority to comply with its provisions, and we hope that the Convention will soon achieve universality.

We support the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We believe that this is the appropriate forum to analyse future courses of action in relation to disarmament. It should have a balanced agenda that seeks to incorporate the interests of the various actors involved and brings about a genuine updating of this issue, which has come to occupy a role of the greatest importance for our Government.

On a different subject, we note with special concern the worldwide commercialization of the transport of dangerous materials. In this connection, we attach special importance to the adoption of measures to regulate international maritime transport of radioactive wastes and spent nuclear fuel in accordance with the highest international safety standards.

Our concern is based on the risks that such transport poses for the health of the inhabitants and the marine environment of the regions of the coastal States where such transit takes place. Accordingly, we again reiterate the need to strengthen, within the competent international organizations, the regulation of the transport of radioactive wastes and spent nuclear fuel. This should include, among other things, guarantees that the marine environment will not be polluted, exchange of information on the routes selected, mandatory provision of information to coastal States on contingency plans in the event of an accident in international maritime transport, a commitment to recover radioactive wastes in case of accidents involving ships carrying them, and payment of compensation in the event of injury or damage. We are convinced that any progress we can make in this area will prove mutually advantageous both for the coastal States and for the States involved in this form of transport.

Mr. Makonga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation welcomes your election, Sir, as Chairman of this important Committee of the General Assembly, which is charged with matters of disarmament and international security. Your reputation in the field of disarmament gives all delegations confidence in the effective guidance of the work of this Committee. My delegation heartily congratulates both you and your country, the Kingdom of Belgium, to which I wish to reiterate the great friendship of my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his outstanding reports on disarmament, peace and international security. They have proved indispensable for a better understanding of the question of peace, which is of paramount importance for the security of the whole of humankind.

I must take note, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation, of the outstanding work done by your predecessor, Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe of Botswana, for his masterful conduct of the work of the First Committee during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

The dawn of the third millennium is upon us. Slowly but surely, we are approaching the threshold of the twenty-first century. Humankind has achieved great progress in all areas during the century that is drawing to a close. While such progress is a source of great pride at the social, economic, political and technological levels, especially with regard to nuclear technology, progress in the area of armaments threatens the security of humankind. The uncertainty caused by nuclear technology for international peace and security is continuing to grow. Those who possess this type of weapons of mass destruction are becoming more and more concerned because they are thoroughly familiar with their most devastating effects.

During the first half of the month of May this year, nuclear tests in South-East Asia attracted attention and were loudly denounced, in particular by those countries that possess weapons of mass destruction. The producers of such weapons are not protected from the threats that they pose. They themselves are threatened in the same way as those who do not possess them.

These threats, which give rise to suspicion, distrust and caution, lead to the formulation of many agreements and consensus on disarmament, but also to inertia in putting such plans into effect. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) provides a clear example. Negotiations are deadlocked between the Russian Federation and the United States with regard to START III, which is aimed at reducing nuclear warheads and their delivery systems.

My country, whose resources could have enabled us to produce fissile materials in the past, joined all the other countries of the world in condemning the recent nuclear tests. With equal vigour we condemn the possession and stockpiling of all weapons of mass destruction, and we join the call for countries to renounce those weapons.

All humankind has a horror of these weapons of mass destruction. Our security lies not in the arms race but in the confidence that the countries that possess such weapons are able to inspire in those that do not. The monopoly of those weapons by some encourages those that do not possess them to try to develop them. All humankind would gain if there were open negotiations leading to the total destruction of such weapons.

It has been about a year and a half since my country came out of a war of liberation that came about as a result of decades of poverty for our people. At the end of the war my country welcomed all the international, regional and subregional initiatives aimed at achieving international peace and security.

We harbour no warlike intentions; nor do we covet the territory of our neighbours. We are eager to promote the social and economic development of our people, which has been delayed since the 1970s, despite the wealth of our natural resources. My country has made economic development its weapon against the poverty of our people.

In order to bring peace to our national territory and stimulate the social and economic recovery of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government has recovered all of the weapons that were in the possession of the former Zairian Armed Forces. My Government's struggle against the proliferation of small arms has yielded considerable results throughout our national territory.

Without meeting any internal resistance and with the support of the people, the Government has established as its main priority — to the detriment of excessive armament — the social and economic development of the Republic, which can be brought about only through the well-being of the people.

Considerable results have been achieved without outside assistance. The people have finally been able to eat on a daily basis, leaving behind the necessity of eating one meal every two days or of having members of the family take it in turns to eat. The entire population has praised the policies of the Government in promoting social development at the expense of arms policies. The war imposed upon us by neighbouring countries to break our spirit taught us that humankind is composed not only of lambs but of wolves.

Some analysts have said that envy of its resources is the reason why my country has been the victim of armed aggression. The Congolese population, which upon liberation was deprived of weapons by the struggle against the proliferation of light weapons, was victimized by the forces of aggression of neighbouring countries, whose diabolical cruelty has exacted — and is still exacting — a great human cost.

That aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo has challenged the will of the entire international community to bring peace to the subregion, which has been engulfed in flames since the 1970s. The hotbeds of tension have moved from one country to another, depending on the arms manufacturers or vendors, under the sometimes complaisant regard of international institutions that have responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

The industrial infrastructures have been completely dismantled in the part of our country under occupation and have been transferred to the aggressor countries. The economic fabric of the country, already worn down by decades of poverty, has been completely destroyed in the occupied provinces. Gold, diamonds and other precious materials have been systematically plundered.

This situation is of great concern to my Government. Sovereignty and territorial integrity, having again become matters of essential importance, are now assigned top priority among all the objectives of our sovereign State and will henceforth absorb all of the resources of our country. The balance between social development and disarmament will inevitably be upset if a peaceful resolution of the situation is slow to arrive.

I should like to dwell for a moment on a crisis that is seriously threatening regional and international security, a matter for which this Committee has responsibility. The poverty created by the war harms not only the population of my country but those of the aggressor countries as well. All the countries involved in the conflict are developing countries. The meagre resources at their disposal should be assigned to the social well-being of their respective populations rather than to war. No matter how long or short this war may be, development will be sacrificed for its sake. If we arm ourselves further, social progress, which is the major goal of any responsible Government, will suffer. However, failing to arm ourselves further will mean exposing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our State vulnerable to danger.

Faced with this dilemma, should we give credit to the claims of those warlike individuals who say, "Those who want peace must prepare for war"? That leads us to ask how we can reduce our military budgets in the face of the constant danger of a war imposed on us by our neighbours.

The war's destruction of the economic fabric of the country, the proliferation of small arms in the subregion and the displacement of the population have shattered the hope for peace, stability and sustainable development that was beginning to see the light of day in my country.

Africa produces very few weapons of war, but today it is the theatre of a number of armed conflicts. The current conflicts, like others in the history of our continent, have caused considerable human losses. In terms of world trade, the continent has given up its wealth to enrich other continents, even at the cost of the lives of its children.

Still today, human lives in Africa are viewed through the barrel of a gun by arms merchants, who consider them to be part of the economic cycle of their investment in armaments. Yet Africa, which is a good market for capital, has many other areas in which non-African businesses could invest and earn more than they do by investing in human death.

Biological and chemical weapons are feared just as much as other weapons of mass destruction. My country, which denounces those weapons just as we denounce nuclear weapons, is concerned about another form of biological threat, one that might kill more slowly than the machete in the ethnic conflicts of the Great Lakes region, but that is nonetheless a major threat to the populations of the occupied areas. I am referring to the HIV virus, which the soldiers of the aggressor troops are spreading by raping Congolese women and girls. According to Marie-Louise Ndala, Coordinator of the National Network for Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS, this is truly a great disaster waiting to happen.

The international community must take advantage of the technological progress made if we are to create a world that is free of insecurity and threats to the peace. We must give impetus to all ongoing negotiations in the field of disarmament and promote the processes and treaties aimed at denuclearizing our world. We must also safeguard international peace by calling on States to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other States. We must do what we can to eliminate threats of all kinds — physical, biological or others — in order to bring security to all humankind on the eve of the third millennium, which we will be entering in one year, two months and 11 days.

Mr. Čalovski (Macedonia): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. You and your Bureau will have my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I should like to note with great satisfaction the presence in this Committee of my friend Vladimir Petrovsky, Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva and an acknowledged expert on international security and disarmament affairs.

I am pleased also to recall the important statement made by the Secretary-General at the beginning of our general debate last week.

As in the past, this year the First Committee will examine many issues important to disarmament and to the maintenance of international peace and security. We have before us voluminous documents, with more to come, and we will be discussing and adopting many draft resolutions. It is not easy to digest all this information in such a short period of time. On the basis of the documents before us, one could very easily conclude that the First Committee is not only a disarmament Committee. The fact that it is overloaded with so many aspects of disarmament, in our view — which is shared by other delegations — negatively affects the Charter-mandated duty of the General Assembly to examine all aspects of the present political situation, regional or global, with the aim of contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security, and preventing wars and conflicts and helping to resolve ongoing ones.

Due to present work arrangements, the General Assembly cannot play the role in world political affairs that was envisaged for it in the Charter. This is hindering the strengthening of multilateralism. We must agree on a new arrangement which will enhance the role and relevance of the General Assembly.

The present international political and security situation is in many ways unsatisfactory. We are witnessing too many wars, conflicts and crises which threaten international peace and security; they require urgent solutions. One cannot say that Member States are ignorant or that they do not like to be involved in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. The General Assembly and its First Committee are partly involved, mainly in a general deliberation about the conflicts or crises but not so much in the effort to resolve them.

We are lucky to have an active and devoted Secretary-General who is discharging his duties in an exemplary manner. It is also good that we have a diligent Security Council. But the fact is that many Member States feel marginalized in the effort to strengthen international peace and security. This is the main reason why multilateralism is going through a difficult period. Of course, something should be done about this negative development. Until then, major decisions on international peace and security will be taken outside of our Organization.

Last week the representative of Austria spoke at length on behalf of the European Union. My delegation shares those stated positions. In his comprehensive and very-well-prepared statement, that representative spoke about important aspects of the current problems on the international political scene that affect the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is well known that my country's region is continuing to experience enormous difficulties and to face situations that threaten international peace and security. Just a few days ago, a new war in the Balkans was avoided, at the last moment. It would have been the sixth one this century. The Balkans were once a centre of European civilization, but now the region has become known worldwide primarily because of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo and Metohija. It is true that we have witnessed an enormous desire to help on the part of the international community, and I am sure that will continue. We are optimistic that the region will soon leave its difficulties behind and enter a period of development.

For that to become a reality, the international community will have to play a key role in enabling the Balkans to enter this period of development, peace and security. Good illustrations are the present arrangements in Kosovo and Metohija; the positive reports on the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the successful outcome of the meeting of the Heads of Government of the Balkan countries, which took place in Antalya, Turkey, some days ago; and the Agreement on Establishment of the Multinational Peace Force of South-Eastern Europe, among Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Romania, Turkey and the Republic of Macedonia, signed in Skopje, the capital of my country, on 26 September this year.

The Antalya Declaration, the Summit Declaration of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe signed by the Prime Ministers of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania, stresses:

> "As we approach the end of this century, we stress our common will to open a chapter of peace, understanding, economic welfare, prosperity and cooperation in the history of our region for the benefit of our peoples and of whole Europe. We are conscious that this can only be achieved by means of strengthening our good-neighbourly relations, promoting democratic values, the rule of law, human rights, including rights of persons belonging to national minorities, solidarity and cooperation. To this end, we firmly support further development of our mutual relations in all fields on a bilateral and multilateral basis."

It also emphasizes:

> "We do not ignore the existence of serious challenges to regional stability, including tensions, divergences and even crises. Our political will and determination for cooperation, supported by our peoples, are our most valuable assets to respond to such challenges. Our success in creating a more favourable political and economic environment will also facilitate the timely integration of all the countries of the region into the European and international communities. We strongly emphasize the importance of addressing the regional issues by the countries of South-Eastern Europe jointly."

It is important in this context to cite article II of the Principles of the Agreement on the Multinational Peace Force South-Eastern Europe:

> "1. The Parties ensure that the activities of the Multinational Peace Force South-Eastern Europe (MPFSEE/the Force) or South-Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG/the Brigade) hereby established are consistent with the purposes and the principles of the United Nations Charter.
>
> "2. This initiative:
>
> "a. is neither directed against any third state nor intended to form a military alliance of any form against any country or a group of countries.
>
> "b. is transparent and open to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Partnership for Peace (PfP) nations in the Region, 'able and willing' to contribute constructively, at any later stage.
>
> "c. will be in line with and supportive of PfP programmes which aim at the improvement of the regional cooperation within PfP and shall allow essential cooperation within the framework of the United Nations (UN), NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Western European Union (WEU)."

On the basis of an objective analysis of the political situation of our region, with the aim of having a twenty-first century free from war conflicts, the following position should be reaffirmed and strictly observed by the member States.

The United Nations Charter and international law must be strictly complied with. In particular, the principles of good-neighbourly relations, the inviolability of international borders among States, and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all States must be respected by all. International cooperation in all fields on the basis of mutual interests and respect should be promoted, taking into account the necessity of preventing the marginalization of States. Democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and solidarity should be promoted without hesitation or reservation.

To achieve results in these endeavours, the most important parts of practical policies and actions should be the undertaking of timely preventive measures; the speedy solution of ongoing conflicts and crises by combined political, economic and social measures; and the promotion of political and economic regional and global integration.

The future of our region lies therefore in its Europeanization, not in its Balkanization. It is difficult to foresee a stable and prosperous Europe without a stable and prosperous Balkans.

The process of disarmament is progressing, but it is too slow for us to be able to express satisfaction. There is a big gap between the awareness of the importance of the process and the readiness to undertake measures to promote the process. The slogan "less armament, better security" is not being followed by practical measures. Thus, we have enormous quantities of armaments and their production is increasing. What are we going to do with such a huge stockpile of armaments? If they are being produced not to be used, then the production and stockpiling of armaments is an irrational affair. This kind of situation is the main reason why, for many countries, the disarmament process is not a priority issue. It deserves to be. They have to find other means to strengthen their security, in the first place through the improvement of their relations with the neighbouring countries and with the countries of the region.

In our view, conventional weapons are the major threat to international peace and security. Every country has the right to have weapons for its national defence, but not to have more than what is reasonably necessary for that purpose. The problem is that many countries have more than they need for their national defence. Many countries are making lucrative business by producing various kinds of conventional weapons, small or large, offensive or defensive. At present, the production of these weapons is huge, stocks are increasing, and trade is lucrative and growing. Secrecy in this regard is deep. There are thousands of secret arrangements, both bilateral and multilateral. There are numerous illicit arrangements. There is no satisfactory international regime for the production, stockpiling, trade and use of conventional weapons. In this chaotic situation, each country is doing its best to protect its security. In a word, we are witnessing a really unhealthy security situation.

As a result of this, we are in favour of the establishment of an international regime which will regulate the production, stockpiling and trade of conventional weapons, large and small, and will ban illegal production and trafficking. We should, perhaps, start with a ban of the production and trade of offensive weapons and the international illegal trade in small arms. Of course, this does not mean that other measures dealing with transparency are not important. But ensuring transparency alone, without undertaking legally binding obligations, will not help to promote the maintenance of international peace and security. We endorse the Secretary-General's statements that disarmament should be concerned with small and large weapons and that we cannot afford to slacken our efforts to contain the proliferation of larger weapons.

I am pleased to state the satisfaction of the Republic of Macedonia that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention — will enter into force in March 1999. The Republic of Macedonia has ratified the Convention and hopes that it will soon become a universal ban on landmines. The strong international will and resolve to ban antipersonnel mines is the main reason for the satisfactory speed with which the Convention has been ratified. We would like to recognize the special effort and role of Canada, and to note with satisfaction the initiative of the Government of Mozambique to host the first meeting of States parties, in Maputo in May 1999.

The Republic of Macedonia has from the outset been in favour of the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. This is so because we do not have such weapons and do not intend to have them in our defence arsenal, and because we fully adhere to the position that the elimination of these weapons can immensely enhance international peace and security and is a matter of interest and benefit to all States.

The April 1997 entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction was the most important event of the disarmament process. It was possible due to the political will of so many States and because of their resolve to eliminate chemical weapons from their military arsenals and in that way to help the maintenance of international peace and security. I was personally very pleased to witness the Chemical Weapons Convention's entry into force, because it was concluded during my term of office as President of the Conference on Disarmament. We now have the duty to strengthen the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and to see that the Convention is fully observed. The Republic of Macedonia is in favour of strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. We would like to see an early conclusion of the projected protocol. In the meantime, we have to make sure that the Convention is observed.

There has been no major progress in the area of nuclear disarmament. We have witnessed nuclear tests by India and by Pakistan. There is no satisfaction with the preparations for the year-2000 review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), following the outcome of this year's session of the Preparatory Committee. The expected vigorous START process did not materialize; the Conference on Disarmament was unable to start meaningful work due to an enormous gap between the positions of nuclear and non-nuclear States. The good news was Brazil's accession to the NPT, which my delegation would like to note with satisfaction, and the agreement in the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee to negotiate a fissile materials cut-off treaty. Also, we are pleased with the stated intention of India and Pakistan to join the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Although we are not happy with the present state of affairs, there is no alternative but to continue to work to strengthen the NPT regime, to insist that all States become parties to that Treaty, and to insist that the nuclear States work much harder towards the realization of the goal that the twenty-first century should be free of nuclear weapons. In that effort, an important role could be played by ratifying the CTBT. The Republic of Macedonia is committed to ratifying the Treaty. Also very important in our view is the initiative to create nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned. Not only do these strengthen the NPT regime; it is our view that they strengthen regional peace and security, which is even more important. Therefore, we have no hesitation in supporting the establishment of such zones in the Middle East, in South Asia, in Central Asia, in the southern hemisphere and elsewhere. It is very important to note with satisfaction the decision of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan to abandon nuclear weapons, and to be non-nuclear States.

By the nature of its statute, the Conference on Disarmament is the main international body for the promotion of disarmament. We cannot say that the Conference concluded its work this year with significant results. For this, one cannot blame the Conference itself, the Secretariat of the Conference or the delegations to the Conference. The lack of political will and resolve of the members of the Conference on Disarmament to push the disarmament process through the Conference last year or this year should be viewed with concern. Instead of preparing legally binding instruments, the Conference spent much of its time as a forum for the discussion of important questions of the disarmament process. It is the duty of the General Assembly to address the present concerns. In our view, this problem can be resolved if it is seen as part of the process of reform of the United Nations. We cannot struggle for a relevant United Nations if an organ such as the Conference on Disarmament continues to be irrelevant. It is urgent, therefore, that the General Assembly review the question of the membership, the methods of work and the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference should be open for membership to all Member States. No member of the Conference should have the right to block the membership of any State Member of the United Nations. The Conference should abandon its present methods of work. It should not establish committees for various agenda items and should abolish the practice of appointing special rapporteurs. The Conference should examine each agenda item at informal plenary meetings and should adopt its decisions at formal meetings. Expertise should be provided by the secretariat of the Conference, not by member States. In our view, if the Conference on Disarmament wants to be relevant, it should give priority to conventional weapons — small or large, offensive or defensive. At the same time, it should abandon the practice of repeating itself on various aspects of nuclear disarmament.

The Disarmament Commission continues to be of marginal importance. It is obvious that there is not much interest in the Commission among States Members of the United Nations. We should therefore seriously consider the need for such a body. There could be a need for a broad and organized discussion of some disarmament questions, such as the need to organize a fourth special session on disarmament, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones or practical measures for disarmament. We would venture to suggest that this need for broad and organized discussion could be much better served by resumed sessions of the First Committee. The discussion would be more relevant, more States would participate and that arrangement would also be less costly.

The agenda of the First Committee, as I stated at the beginning of my statement, is overloaded with disarmament issues. The fact is that in the allotted time it cannot discuss any of these issues thoroughly without well-prepared documents from the Secretariat. The discussion becomes one of routine and generality. Its impact on the disarmament process is therefore not satisfactory. The First Committee does not discuss important issues of the current international political and security situation, the current threats to international peace and security. This unsatisfactory situation can be overcome by having a resumed session of the First Committee to deliberate on the current important aspects of the international political and security situation and on the disarmament process.

Before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Committee that my delegation, together with some other delegations interested in agenda item 64, entitled "Maintenance of international security — prevention of the violent disintegration of States", will submit a draft resolution along lines similar to those of resolution 51/55 of 10 December 1996. We hope the Committee will adopt it without a vote.

Mr. Al-Hassan (Oman): I would like at the outset to congratulate the Chairman and the members of the Bureau. I would also like to say that we are grateful to see the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs in our midst today.

I have prepared my statement in Arabic. However, I have decided to deliver it in English, with one request: that the Arabic version of the text be reflected in the records of the Committee.

I will try to be very brief in summarizing the main points regarding international, regional and national concerns that, in our national view, my delegation believes are of the utmost importance.

There is no doubt that recent years have seen tremendous progress in the field of disarmament towards creating a safer and better world for our States and for the generations to come. We believe that the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the process towards closing the loophole in the Biological Weapons Convention, and the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the anti-personnel landmines treaty are without doubt the successes and the fruits of the end of the cold war.

My country, Oman, is a party to all conventions and treaties that deal with weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. I wish to reiterate here what my Foreign Minister stated this year before the General Assembly: Oman has decided to sign the CTBT soon.

Let me now speak about the Middle East, of which we are a part. Unfortunately, while the world is moving towards disarmament and creating a more secure world, that region still remains volatile. We view the situation as dangerous and hope that concrete steps will be taken not only by one side, but by all sides and all parties in the region. We believe it is high time for that region to transform itself into a region of tranquillity and coexistence.

Let me just say here that we believe that the Israeli nuclear threat constitutes a threat not only to the region itself, but also to the security and peace of the international community at large. We believe that the existence of nuclear facilities without any international monitoring or safeguards is a serious situation that should be dealt with accordingly. With the current progress towards bringing the peace process on track, we believe a step by Israel such as joining the international community and becoming party to the NPT would be a good step in the right direction.

In this regard, my delegation has continuously supported the initiative to establish the Middle East as a region free of all weapons of mass destruction. We believe that would add to the security of all States in the region, without exception.

Also in terms of our region, while my delegation understands the positions and national reasons that led India and Pakistan, respectively, to resort to nuclear testing, this step necessitates a call on our part to call upon those two neighbourly countries to sign the NPT and the CTBT. We hope that in time they will have a chance to do so without having to jeopardize their national security interests.

Let me conclude this very brief statement by saying that we support the role of the United Nations in terms of disarmament, and we look forward to seeing the Secretariat play a further role in dealing with grand issues that are of concern to the international community. Nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction and other serious weapons are truly of concern to all of us. In our region we want to see the role of the United Nations to be seen. We believe there is room for the United Nations to play an active role in the Middle East and in the Gulf. We hope that in the coming years and days we might see such a role being played.

We assure the Under-Secretary-General of our full understanding and complete cooperation, in particular when it comes to our region and our sphere.

Mr. Mohammed (Ethiopia): Allow me on behalf of my delegation to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, and other members of the Bureau our congratulations on your election to guide the work of the Committee. I am confident that with your experience and able guidance the deliberations of this committee will be successful. Let me seize this opportunity to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in conducting the deliberations.

The post-cold-war period has witnessed encouraging developments in the field of disarmament. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Convention banning anti-personnel landmines and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention are among the notable accomplishments of the past few years. The decisions of the Conference on Disarmament to establish ad hoc committees to negotiate an international arrangement to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices are also positive developments. In spite of these positive developments, much remains to be done to achieve the goal of complete and general disarmament, especially in the area of nuclear disarmament.

Complementing the effective implementation of the NPT and the CTBT with multilateral negotiations on nuclear-weapons issues is essential if we are to achieve nuclear disarmament. The strong commitment and cooperation of nuclear-weapon States is indispensable in this regard. Failure to implement the CTBT will negatively influence the whole process of the disarmament with regard to weapons of mass destruction, which would mean a regression in the disarmament process as a whole. Nuclear disarmament should remain high on the disarmament agenda of the international community. In this light, appropriate steps should be taken, including through the establishment of an ad hoc committee of the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on a phased programme for a complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time-frame.

Needless to say, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones contributes to the consolidation of the international non- proliferation regime and to the strengthening of the security of States belonging to the zones. Thus, the various nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties, including most recently the Treaty of Pelindaba, are most welcome, and their universal acceptance is essential. Efforts to establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones in the remaining regions of the world should also be encouraged and supported.

Ethiopia welcomes the entry into force and the growing number of ratifications of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. Our country places high priority on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We would like to underscore that the elimination of chemical weapons and the attainment of universal adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention demand a strong commitment from all States, big or small, rich or poor alike.

It has been widely recognized by the international community that the proliferation of light weapons and illicit arms-trafficking pose a significant threat to peace, security and development. Excessive accumulations of these weapons have ignited conflicts and caused immeasurable social and economic destruction and the dislocation of populations. The magnitude of these problems is particularly evident in many parts of Africa. In this context, we agree with the conclusion of the Secretary-General, expressed in his report entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" (A/52/871), that the issue should be addressed as a matter of urgency. We also support the recommendation by the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade.

Cognizant of the fact that transparency in armaments would contribute to enhancing confidence-building among States, Ethiopia has started in the last few years to provide information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. In 1997 Ethiopia was among eight African countries that provided information to the Register, and it will continue to provide such information.

The conclusion of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is an important step in disarmament in the area of small arms. Ethiopia fully participated in the Ottawa process and signed the Convention on 3 December 1997, as soon as it was opened for signature. Ethiopia, as a country that has been highly affected by these weapons, attaches paramount importance to the implementation of the Convention and seeks substantive support in its demining efforts. In this connection, we welcome the fortieth ratification, by Burkina Faso, which will ensure the entry into force of the Convention on 1 March 1999. We also appreciate the willingness of Mozambique to host the first conference of the States parties in Maputo in May 1999.

Notwithstanding the very encouraging efforts by the international community to ban and eliminate anti-personnel landmines, developments in certain parts of the world, in particular in the Horn of Africa, have become a source of serious concern. Here we are referring to the irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines by the Eritrean Government, with the aim of terrorizing civilians, denying them access to farmlands and forcing them to flee their homes, as part of Eritrea's war of aggression against Ethiopia. These acts of the Eritrean Government not only constitute a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law but also represent a serious challenge to international and regional efforts to ban and eliminate anti-personnel landmines.

Please allow me at this juncture to say a few words about the situation in our subregion of the Horn of Africa. In the past few years Ethiopia has made every effort, in particular through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to work for peace and to prevent and contain conflicts. In this respect, as mandated by the OAU and IGAD, Ethiopia has continued to assist in the efforts to resolve the crisis in Somalia. Although success has not come easily, we remain convinced that regional cooperation and mechanisms could play an important role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Another major disappointment that we have had recently in the area of peace and security in our subregion is the naked aggression that Eritrea has been unleashing against Ethiopia since 12 May 1998. This aggression has obviously been a challenge to our efforts in strengthening regional security and disarmament. However, in spite of the continued aggression of Eritrea, we are making the necessary effort to resolve the conflict by peaceful means on the basis of Security Council resolution 1177 (1998), of 26 June 1998, and the resolution of the thirty-fourth summit of the Heads of State or Government of the OAU.

It is my country's firm conviction that, as a guarantee of peace and security, there is no alternative to disarmament in all categories of weapons, conventional weapons as well as weapons of mass destruction. Ethiopia will continue to contribute to the success of the efforts of the international community towards that end.

Mr. Sabel (Israel): Please accept my delegation's congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this very important Committee of the General Assembly. Please feel assured that you enjoy our full support and cooperation in the task ahead of us all here. At the same time, I would like to express our thanks to Mr. Nkgowe for the efficient way he conducted the work of this Committee during the previous session.

Israel is a small State with a population of less than 6 million, concentrated mostly in a coastal strip some 20 kilometres wide. The vulnerability inherent in our geography, combined with the potentially existential threat to us posed by some of our neighbours, inevitably influences our attitude as to how to achieve arms control and disarmament arrangements. Notwithstanding our special security environment, we fully share the concerns of the world community about the proliferation of weapons. Our concern applies to the proliferation of both conventional and non-conventional weapons.

Israel is, I believe, unique in being in the unhappy situation of having neighbour States, armed with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, some of which are openly denying our right of existence and claiming to be working for our annihilation. This inevitably makes us cautious in approaching issues that affect our security.

Israel believes that arms control in our region will prove successful only if it is conceived as an enhancement of the security of each and every State and not as an endangerment of such security. Israel's approach to issues of arms control and disarmament could be characterized as a combination of optimism and realism.

We are optimistic as to the prospects of arms control and must continue to be so for our sake and for the sake of future generations. All of us in the Middle East have suffered from the consequences of the arms race in the area and from the proliferation of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. If the resources that have been devoted to weapons had been invested in economic and social development, I believe the Middle East now would be an economic powerhouse and a source of admiration for the world rather than what I suspect is a source of worry.

We are optimistic because we see what has already been achieved. We are optimistic that the peace process that commenced with a Peace Treaty with Egypt, and was followed by ongoing peace talks with the Palestinians — ongoing this very day — and a Treaty of Peace with Jordan, will eventually encompass the whole of the region and bring with it regional stability.

We must, however, temper our optimism with realism. Our area includes States that threaten our security and continue to negate our very right of existence. One of these States, Iraq, devoted a major part of its vast income from oil to attempts to develop nuclear weapons. It was in the process of developing those weapons, notwithstanding its ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the existence of safeguards. It developed chemical and biological weapons and used the poison gas it developed both against its own population and against Iran. During the Gulf war its missiles were fired at Israel's cities and cities in Saudi Arabia. Those same missiles were capable of carrying non-conventional warheads.

Other States in our area have developed chemical weapons, and they possess and continue to maintain operational ballistic missiles armed with chemical warheads. I must admit that it sounded to our ears strange in the extreme to hear statements in this Committee from such States berating us for not being forthcoming on disarmament. It would be rash in the extreme for Israel not to carefully review arms control arrangements in the light of the behaviour of such States and in the light of the reality of our area.

It is against this background that we in Israel have attempted to fashion our arms control policy. We envisage arms control fundamentally as a regional endeavour incorporating, where feasible, the obligations of international instruments. Universal international instruments certainly have a role to play, but we see regionally negotiated arrangements, reinforced by mutual verification by the States in the region, as the key to their successful application. Confidence-building measures have a role to play here, and the regional arms control and regional security talks were a step in that direction.

The experience of other areas in the world has shown that full confidence is usually achieved only where States enter into legally binding regional arrangements incorporating mutually verifiable compliance. Verification by a third party, however efficient and however well meaning, will never obtain the same degree of assurance that can be obtained as when verification is carried out by experts of the State that would be threatened by a violation. Nevertheless, there are some issues that can be effectively covered by international instruments, and in those cases Israel could accept their application without waiting for circumstances that would allow mutual verification.

The general premise on which Israel's policy is based is inevitably reflected in our attitude to the various issues on the agenda of this Committee, and I would like to refer to some of the issues.

On the issue of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), Israel fully supports the nuclear-test ban. We have ratified the Partial Test-Ban Treaty, we have signed the CTBT and we have not conditioned our signature on regional developments. An Israeli delegation was active in the drafting of the Treaty, and we remain constructively involved in the work of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization. In that respect, our endeavours are aimed at the expeditious development of all the necessary concepts, manuals, procedures and systems needed for a viable and effective CTBT Organization in accordance with the Treaty. Furthermore, Israel has begun preparations for involvement and integration in the proposed International Monitoring System.

Although Israel has not yet ratified the Treaty, we are aware of the international legal obligations that apply to any State upon signature of such a treaty, even prior to ratification, and needless to say, Israel accepts the obligation involved. We would like to see universal adoption of the CTBT, and we welcome the recent statements of India and Pakistan in this respect.

Moving to another major issue, Israel firmly believes in the eventual establishment of a mutually verified nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We would like to see such a zone free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, as well as ballistic missiles. We believe such a zone should be established by direct negotiations between States after they recognize each other and have established full peaceful relations with each other. It cannot be established by parties other than the parties themselves, nor can it be established in a situation where some of the States claim they are in a state of war and refuse in principle to maintain peaceful relations. The zone would be directly negotiated and mutually verifiable, but it would, in fact, achieve on a regional basis the non-proliferation goals of the NPT.

The agenda item entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East" is a blatant political manoeuvre. The real dangers of proliferation have been ignored, and they do not emanate from Israel. The evidence produced by the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Action Team on Iraq is ignored, the North Korean crisis is ignored, Iranian efforts to acquire non-conventional capabilities are ignored.

Israel seeks no dispute with the Iranian people nor with the Iranian Government. We cannot fail, however, to be worried when Iran develops long-range ballistic missiles and displays them publicly while declaring that they are intended for use against Israel.

Israel does not threaten its neighbours; Israel has signed the CTBT and carries out the obligations emanating from that signature. We have not violated any international norm; nevertheless we are the subject of this politically inspired agenda item. It is uncalled for and should be removed from the agenda as it was removed from the recent IAEA Assembly.

On the question of a possible fissile material cut-off treaty, Israel is on record as joining the consensus in the General Assembly in 1993. Nor were we opposed to the decision in the Conference on Disarmament this year to establish an ad hoc committee on the basis of the Shannon mandate. The scope of the proposed treaty and negotiations are not yet clear, and Israel, like other States, will have to examine its position on the basis of the exact scope to be defined. I would like to emphasize that we foresee the principle of fissile material cut-off as being subsumed in a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The issue of small arms is increasingly attracting the attention of the international community. Israel views with grave concern the illicit transfer and proliferation of small arms, small-arm ammunition and explosives. This proliferation threatens international security and has exacerbated casualties among civilians and in internal conflicts.

Israel supports international cooperative efforts aimed at curbing the illicit circulation and international trafficking of small arms. Such illicitly transferred small arms are being used by terrorists, guerrilla groups and criminal organizations, with horrific results, and we have heard some representatives of African States pointing them out.

Israel would be happy to join in an international effort to prevent such illicit transfers. In this respect, we note with interest the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. Other proposals worthy of study would be the various proposals that would obligate the marking of firearms during their manufacture.

Israel has signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), but we have not yet ratified it. We note with unhappiness that Egypt is one of the Arab States that has not signed the CWC. One of the factors Israel will have to take into account when making a decision as to ratification is the fact that none of the chemical-weapon-capable or chemical-weapon-suspect armed Arab States have signed, let alone ratified, the treaty. Some have openly declared that they have no intention of so doing. It is a sobering thought for us that some of our neighbours contemplate the use of poison gas against us.

On another issue, Israel is a party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), and I am pleased to be able to inform this Committee that we are in the process of preparing the ratification of the amended Protocol II, concerning mines, and Protocol IV, concerning laser weapons. Although Israel is not a party to the Ottawa agreement on anti-personnel landmines, we in Israel have ceased production of anti-personnel landmines. We have declared a moratorium on their export and therefore will be happy to participate in the drafting of an international agreement banning such export. Israel furthermore participates in international projects for mine clearance and rehabilitation of victims of mines.

Although technically Israel cannot join the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), we have undertaken to comply fully with its provisions. In other fields of non-proliferation supply control, Israel has enacted stringent legislation on export control that enables us to ensure that we are not a source of proliferation.

On the confidence-building measures of transparency in armaments, Israel supports the principle of the Register and makes an annual report. We do not, however, believe it is fruitful to widen the scope of the Register, and we feel effort should be devoted rather to encouraging States to report to the existing Register. We find it strange to hear the vocal call of some of our neighbour States for vastly increasing the scope of the Register when they in fact fail to submit any report, even under the existing limited scope.

Finally, Israel will continue to participate in international arms-control projects despite our assessment of critical regional threats. Taking into account the very harsh history of our region, I believe Israel's record is impressive, and we in Israel intend to continue to play our part in the arms-control efforts of the family of nations.

Ms. Simone (Armenia): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. This promises to be an active year and one which will require great skill and energy to guide us through the debate and adoption of draft resolutions. We have full confidence in your abilities, and those of the Bureau, to meet the challenges we will face this year.

The year 1998 saw setbacks and achievements in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament. The nuclear tests conducted in South Asia have reminded us how much work remains to be done in the area of nuclear non-proliferation. On the other hand, we witnessed a significant achievement when the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was ratified by over 40 countries in nine months. In addition, an agreement was reached to begin negotiations on the ban of the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. While there have been some events this year which have also posed a threat to international peace and security, these events have served to reinforce the importance of the work being done in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

As a non-nuclear-weapon State developing peaceful nuclear energy, Armenia attaches great importance to the issues of international compliance with the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament objectives and obligations. We reaffirm our commitment to the full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

To further ensure the implementation of the Treaty's objective — to prevent nuclear proliferation — States parties must continue to abide by the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Armenia supports strengthening and improving the effectiveness of the safeguards regime by introducing the Protocol Additional to Safeguards Agreements. We are proud to state that Armenia has become the first State with an operating power plant to sign the Protocol Additional to its safeguards agreement.

Armenia attaches great importance to cooperation in the field of peaceful energy use and nuclear safety. In this context, I am pleased to announce that a month ago Armenia ratified the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Nuclear safety is a fundamental issue. Universal recognition of the importance of implementing the provisions of the Convention at the regional, national and international levels will promote and maintain the highest standards of safety. It is in all of our interests that those States that have not yet signed and ratified the Convention do so at the earliest possible date.

The non-proliferation regime has been seriously tested over the past six months. The nuclear tests in South Asia undermined the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We welcome the indications given by India and Pakistan that they are moving towards adherence to the CTBT. We were pleased to see the high-level talks between the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan last week and hope that this is the beginning of a fruitful dialogue which will lead to a resolution of the issues which gave rise to the testing earlier this year.

On a more positive note, the recent agreement to launch negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament reaffirms the commitment of the international community to strengthen peace and security. The fissile material cut-off treaty is considered an important next step after the CTBT, as it will prevent the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Armenia joined the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) with an underlying commitment to strengthening regional stability. Unfortunately, Armenia and Georgia are the only two States in the Transcaucasus to have taken this step. It is hard to see how an effective chemical weapons ban and control regime can be established in the Caucasus if all those in the region are not parties to the Convention.

As a member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Armenia, together with other member States, will make every effort to further its most pressing task: that of the universal application of the CWC. In this regard, it is essential to ensure an efficient implementation regime for the Convention.

Armenia seeks to enhance cooperation among member States in the chemical industry, as provided for by the Convention, in particular the exchange of technical information, equipment management and chemical materials production. We also welcome economic cooperation within the context of the CWC at the regional level. This is where the nations of the Caucasus need to collaborate in a common effort aimed at development and prosperity, which in turn will enhance mutual confidence and regional stability.

Armenia has always stated that it has never had, does not now possess and will never acquire any chemical weapons in the future. We believe that freeing the world from chemical weapons is an achievable goal.

To fully prevent the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, it is necessary to focus on the issue of enhancing the implementation and verification regimes. One step towards this end is the successful conclusion of the negotiations by the ad hoc group on the strengthening of the verification and compliance provisions of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

The possibility of use or accidental emission of biological weapons, in addition to creating political instability, would cause enormous human losses, as well as have a devastating impact on agriculture and food production. We are confident that these concerns are shared throughout the world. Therefore, we welcome the increased efforts of States to successfully conclude the negotiations on the verification protocol to the BWC. We believe that the development and subsequent implementation of the verification protocol will significantly reduce the chance of biological weapons being used.

Armenia welcomes the fortieth ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which will become a binding international instrument on 1 March, 1999. We consider the Convention an important step forward in the elimination of one category of excessively injurious conventional weapons. Armenia supports the Convention and is ready to take measures consistent with its provisions. However, if it is to assume legally binding obligations, Armenia expects clearly observed readiness and reciprocity from our neighbours in the region.

We are concerned with Azerbaijan's reluctance to accede to the ban. The existence of a large number of landmines along our borders with Azerbaijan is a great source of concern that must be addressed. Armenia's full participation in the Convention is contingent upon a similar level of political commitment by other States in the region to assuming their obligations under the Convention.

Armenia attaches great importance to the full implementation of conventional arms control agreements. We believe that the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) is an essential instrument to guarantee stability in the region and prevent large-scale conventional attacks. We welcome the negotiations that have already begun in Vienna to adapt the Treaty to the new European security environment, with due consideration of the interests of all CFE States parties. The Treaty shall remain an important instrument in maintaining European conventional stability and security.

Despite the major role the Treaty has had in providing stability within its area of application, there still remain States parties that flagrantly violate the CFE Treaty. Azerbaijan considerably exceeds its Treaty limitations in three Treaty-limited ground equipment categories. Its continued disregard of the Treaty's principles threatens stability in the Caucasus and in Europe generally.

Armenia considers the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva as the central forum for negotiating global disarmament instruments. We believe that the successful negotiation of the CTBT is a clear example of the capability of the Conference in working out global instruments aimed at strengthening peace and security throughout the world.

Armenia has acceded to all global instruments on disarmament that have been negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. Furthermore, we have stated that we remain committed to the principles of disarmament. In pursuing its national security policies, Armenia has made it a priority to support international efforts to free the world of weapons of mass destruction. As a sign of our commitment to the principles of disarmament, Armenia wishes to become a full Conference member. We believe that membership will allow us to contribute to the area of disarmament. We hope that States parties will support Armenia in its willingness to engage more actively in the work of the Conference.

In conclusion, Armenia is looking forward to actively participating in the work of the First Committee this year.

Mr. Kanju (Pakistan): It is a pleasure to be able to warmly congratulate Mr. Mernier on his well-deserved election as the Chairman of the First Committee at this important session. The decisions of this Committee will greatly influence the course of international developments in the field of security, disarmament and arms control. The exercise of his diplomatic skills will be in considerable demand at this session.

My statement here will definitely focus on the many statements made here this year that have prominently highlighted the nuclear tests conducted last May by India and, in response, by Pakistan. Since this is an issue of the most direct and vital concern to my country, I wish to utilize this opportunity to explain Pakistan's perspective — our challenging security environment, our patient endeavours on behalf of non-proliferation, our calculated decision to respond to India and our responsible approach in the aftermath of the nuclearization of South Asia.

For any objective evaluation of these tests, it is essential to bear in mind the history and the context of nuclear proliferation in South Asia. It is essential to be aware of the ambitions of India and the compulsions of Pakistan.

Since its independence, Pakistan has confronted the endemic hostility of its neighbour, India. Three wars have been fought, mainly over the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Even today, a brutal nine-year-old conflict is under way in occupied Kashmir between its 10 million people and an occupation force of over 600,000 Indian troops. Along the Line of Control in Kashmir, there are sharp exchanges of fire almost every day. There is a military stand-off in the Siachen Glacier. Despite the propaganda about the so-called threat from China, almost all of India's military assets — an army of 1.2 million, over 700 combat aircraft, a large naval flotilla — are deployed against Pakistan.

Since last year, the nuclear-capable Prithvi missile — whose declared targets are Pakistan's major cities, sensitive installations and defence assets — has been produced and deployed. Soon, the medium-range Agni missile will be further tested and deployed. At the same time, India is proceeding with the acquisition of a large number of aircraft, anti-missile systems and other armaments, worth over $10 billion, from some of those very countries which decry the nuclearization of South Asia. Meanwhile, Pakistan's conventional capabilities have been severely eroded because of the unjust embargoes and sanctions imposed against us. The growing conventional asymmetry has created the possibility of military aggression being committed against Pakistan once again. Nuclear deterrence is all that stands in the way of such aggression.

It is not Pakistan, but India, which "inducted" the nuclear dimension into the volatile security environment of South Asia. Let me recount a few facts. First, India's ambition to acquire nuclear weapons, though often disguised, has been no secret. India acquired a Canadian research reactor and other nuclear facilities outside safeguards in the 1960s. It has refused since 1968 to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It insisted on the legitimacy of so-called peaceful nuclear explosions. It diverted nuclear fuel from its civilian programme to explode a so-called peaceful nuclear device in May 1974. Since then, it has vastly enlarged the number of its nuclear facilities and fissile material centres outside safeguards.

Second, India simultaneously developed nuclear delivery systems, especially ballistic missiles. The Prithvi, tested 16 times, and the Agni, tested four times, are overtly military programmes encompassing several types of these missiles. India's space launch vehicle will give it an intercontinental ballistic missile capability in the future.

Third, India has developed its nuclear and missile programmes with the active assistance and cooperation of several industrialized countries. Some of this cooperation is continuing today, such as support for the Sagarika sea-based missile.

Fourth, Pakistan's actions in the nuclear and missile fields were taken, at each stage, in response to the escalatory steps by India. Pakistan has exercised considerable self-restraint. We did not reciprocate India's 1974 nuclear test. We exercised unilateral restraint in the production of fissile materials. We held back from deploying and flight-testing our missiles.

Fifth, although every escalatory step was initiated by India, it is Pakistan that was consistently subjected to a series of discriminatory sanctions and penalties. After 1974, civilian safeguarded nuclear cooperation with Pakistan was terminated by the very countries that had made India's nuclear explosion possible. Contracts for the purchase of nuclear facilities under safeguards were aborted through pressure on the supplier countries. Meanwhile, fuel supplies to India were continued. Such discrimination was compounded by specific legislation adopted against Pakistan by some major Powers.

Sixth, Pakistan's initiatives to promote nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia received less than adequate support from the major Powers. For 25 years, Pakistan pressed for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. No serious endeavour was made to convince India that this was a worthy objective. Since 1993 we have pressed for the creation of a zero-missile zone in South Asia. Our great-Power interlocutor refused even to convey this proposal to India. Since 1987 we have been proposing a bilateral nuclear-test-ban treaty. Not a single country supported this initiative, not even those who lecture us today about the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In July 1996, when India threatened to veto the CTBT in the Conference on Disarmament, it was told that it need not adhere to the Treaty so long as it did not block its transmission to the General Assembly. India did indeed veto the Treaty in the Conference, and voted against it in the Assembly. But this had no adverse impact on its bilateral relations with the principal sponsors of the CTBT.

Seventh, when the Indian Government led by the Bharatia Janata Party (BJP) declared its aim of "inducting" nuclear weapons, no official concern was expressed by the major Powers, despite the warning conveyed officially by our Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, to their leaders. When Pakistan's Foreign Minister expressed our concern, on 19 March 1998, to the Conference on Disarmament, there was again no response. Instead, we were assured by influential friends of the "restraint and responsibility" of the new Indian Government. For good measure, they imposed Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) sanctions against a Pakistani entity in reaction to our first missile test.

A sizeable body of opinion in Pakistan is convinced, in the light of the facts I have recounted, that it is only Pakistan, and not India, which is the target of the crusade for non-proliferation. Conspiracy theorists gained further credence when India's preparations for its nuclear tests were not detected either by national technical means or by human intelligence. This was all the more surprising since, four days before the tests, a non-governmental group had circulated a paper in Washington which stated that

> "preparations for an Indian nuclear test have been further confirmed by our sources in India, which report all kinds of feverish night-time activities in the vicinity of Pokhran in Rajasthan state".

When India conducted its three-plus-two tests, the Government of Pakistan was confronted with a fateful decision. We waited 17 days before responding. In formulating our decision, the Prime Minister of Pakistan took full account of the views and suggestions conveyed to him by the leaders of a number of friendly countries, including President Clinton, President Jiang Zemin, Prime Minister Tony Blair, Prime Minister Hashimoto and others. In all these contacts, we dealt with our friends honestly and openly. Unlike others, we did not practice deception.

In the final analysis, our decision to test became inevitable for three overriding reasons: First, there was a steady escalation in the provocations and threats emanating from India. The Prime Minister of India declared that India was a nuclear-weapon State, that it had a "big bomb" and that it was prepared to use this in case of an attack or aggression, conventional or non-conventional. Indian leaders also made it clear that they had weaponized their nuclear capability and had a command and control system in place. Inaction would have eroded national morale in Pakistan. It could have compromised the existential deterrence which had preserved the peace between India and Pakistan for almost two decades.

Secondly, we could not rule out the possibility that the BJP Government would indeed engage in some form of adventurism against Pakistan. The BJP's election manifesto had promised to "induct" nuclear weapons and to conduct "hot-pursuit" attacks across the line of control in Kashmir. They had speedily implemented one promise; we had every reason to fear they might try to deliver on the second.

Our concern was intensified when, on 18 May 1998, the Secretary-General of the BJP and Home Minister of India, Mr. Lal Krishna Advani, stated that

> "Islamabad should realize the change in the geostrategic situation in the region and the world and roll back its anti-India policy, especially with regard to Kashmir. India's bold and decisive step to become a nuclear-weapon State has brought about a qualitative new stage in Indo-Pakistan relations, particularly in finding a solution to the Kashmir problem. It signifies India's resolve to deal firmly and strongly with Pakistan".

Thus, for Pakistan, the danger of aggression was clear and present. Pakistan could not leave the Indian leadership in any doubt about the credibility of our capability to deter and respond devastatingly to any aggression against our country or preemptive strikes against our facilities.

Thirdly, despite our calls for resolute action, the response of the international community was weak and partial. There was no meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Security Council; there was no Security Council resolution; there were no Group of 8 sanctions on funding from international financial institutions. All this was to come only later, after Pakistan had tested. Two nuclear-weapon States wanted to explore India's conditions for CTBT adherence. Several countries welcomed India's sudden agreement to lift its opposition to the negotiations on a fissile-materials treaty in Geneva. It became crystal-clear to Pakistan that, despite the sentiments of support and encouragement conveyed to us, no other Power — not one — was prepared to underwrite Pakistan's security against the possibility of Indian aggression. We had to ensure this ourselves.

Pakistan decided to demonstrate its nuclear capability to deter aggression. Our failure to demonstrate our capability could have eroded the delicate psychological judgements that are the essence of deterrence. Any consequent miscalculation may have led to disastrous consequences. As the 1991 strategic concept of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) states,

> "The fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Allies is political: to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war." *(The Alliance's New Strategic Concept, para. 54)*

Pakistan's action was therefore a legitimate act of self-defence against the possibility of military aggression following India's tests and its provocative actions. Our tests were consistent with Pakistan's right to self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. No international norm, certainly not one to which we have not subscribed, can compromise or supersede our fundamental right to self-defence.

The difference between the Indian and Pakistani actions is crucial. India's tests were a provocation; Pakistan's tests were a reaction. India's tests destabilized the deterrence that had existed in South Asia for the last 20 years; Pakistan's tests restabilized the mutual deterrence.

We are grateful to China for recognizing the distinction between the Indian and Pakistani tests. We are grateful to many other friends for acknowledging this privately. It is therefore sad and regrettable that in their operational response to these tests, many of our friends have failed to make this distinction. The sanctions and other actions taken against Pakistan are unfair and unjust, especially since they have hurt Pakistan much more than they have India. We cannot but deplore this combination of coercion and inequity. It is counter-productive.

Even as we conducted our nuclear tests, we were conscious of the need to take measures to prevent a nuclear or conventional arms race in South Asia. We were conscious of the need to contain the proliferation impact of the South Asian developments. On 2 June 1998, a few days after our tests, Pakistan suggested at the Conference on Disarmament a comprehensive approach to build security and stability in South Asia by promoting measures to avoid war, mutual nuclear restraint, a balance in conventional forces and solutions to the underlying disputes, especially the issue of Kashmir.

The response of the international community in the P-5 communiqué and in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) focused on the non-proliferation implications of the tests rather than on the security and arms escalation dangers in South Asia. While these decisions envisaged a comprehensive approach to security in the region and recognized the need to address the core dispute over Kashmir, they were not an acceptable basis for progress because they incorporated unrealistic objectives, exhibited double standards and failed to fully distinguish between India's provocation and Pakistan's reaction.

Notwithstanding this, we are convinced that there is no fundamental difference in the essential objectives espoused by the international community and by Pakistan. These are to lower tensions and avoid war, prevent nuclear escalation, promote conventional stability, seek solutions to Kashmir and other underlying issues and contain the threat of further nuclear proliferation. We have opened a serious dialogue with the United States on a realistic agenda that seeks to promote all these objectives. Also, we have resumed the Foreign Secretary-level talks with India. In Islamabad last week, our two countries addressed the priority issues of peace and security and Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan has been responsive to the concerns of the international community. Soon after our tests, we announced a unilateral moratorium on further testing. Earlier during this session of the General Assembly, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which we hope will come into force before next September. As the Prime Minister stated,

> "Pakistan's adherence to the Treaty will take place only in conditions free from coercion or pressure." *(A/53/PV.12, p. 13)*

The Prime Minister added in this regard that we expect that the arbitrary restrictions imposed on Pakistan by multilateral institutions will be speedily removed. We also expect that discriminatory sanctions against Pakistan will be lifted, and we count on the full support of the world community for a just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

It was in anticipation of a constructive and coercion-free environment, and notwithstanding our concerns regarding unequal stockpiles, that we agreed to the commencement of the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a non-discriminatory, universal and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. Pakistan has consistently believed that a ban on fissile materials production can be realized only through a universal and non-discriminatory treaty negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. It cannot be achieved through unilateral or partial measures.

We believe that a wide disparity between the fissile material stockpiles of India and Pakistan could erode the stability of nuclear deterrence. The impact of such asymmetry could be further exacerbated once India acquires the S-300 anti-ballistic missile systems and additional anti-aircraft systems. Therefore, in the course of the negotiations in the ad hoc committee, Pakistan will — as envisaged in the Shannon Report — raise its concerns about and seek a solution to the problem of unequal stockpiles.

Pakistan continues to adhere to its policy of not exporting sensitive nuclear technology or equipment. We are prepared to discuss and improve our administrative and regulatory measures to implement this policy. This process should promote non-discrimination and reciprocal benefits. Pakistan cannot be simultaneously considered a partner in and a target of non-proliferation regimes.

Pakistan's priority is to construct a durable structure of peace and security in South Asia. This will involve nuclear and conventional arms restraint, as well as solutions to underlying issues. It will have to be based on the principles of equal security and equal treatment of Pakistan and India. Although India claims to have weaponized and even deployed its nuclear capability, Pakistan is prepared to explore the possibilities for mutual restraint in order to avoid a nuclear arms race and a hair-trigger security environment. But we cannot accept efforts to restrain capabilities at unequal levels. This could seriously jeopardize mutual deterrence.

The stability of mutual deterrence in South Asia may also be adversely affected by the asymmetry in conventional weapons capabilities between India and Pakistan. This asymmetry is growing steadily due to the embargoes still maintained against us by some major Powers and the massive arms acquisitions that India is making. We hope that concerted action will be adopted by the international community to redress this conventional inequality, which will inevitably intensify Pakistan's reliance on its nuclear capabilities.

The Secretary-General's annual report recognizes the Kashmir dispute as a possible nuclear flashpoint. Indeed, Kashmir is the key to resolving the security crisis in South Asia. We welcome the recognition by the P-5 and by the Security Council that Kashmir is a fundamental issue for South Asia and one with implications for international peace and security. But it will not be sufficient to lower tensions over Kashmir. This would have transient and perhaps illusory advantage. There must be genuine progress towards a just solution based on the freely expressed wishes of the Kashmiri people, as envisaged in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Pakistan will make a sincere endeavour in the resumed bilateral dialogue with India to promote progress towards a final settlement of the Kashmir dispute. While addressing the political and legal aspects of the dispute, Pakistan has suggested implementation of a number of humanitarian and confidence-building measures, including the strengthening of the contingent of United Nations observers stationed in Jammu and Kashmir.

Even as the bilateral dialogue proceeds, the United Nations cannot divest itself of the responsibility to encourage and assist in promoting a solution to the Kashmir dispute. It involves, after all, the implementation of several Security Council resolutions. We were happy to receive the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Islamabad last June, although he was, regrettably, unable to visit India. We look forward to receiving the Secretary-General in the near future. We have expressed our readiness to accept his mediation and good offices to resolve the Kashmir dispute and other problems between Pakistan and India.

The call for nuclear restraint in South Asia is based on moral concern about the danger of the use of nuclear weapons. This danger does not arise only, or even primarily, from South Asia. Despite the end of the cold war, the danger of the deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons has not significantly diminished.

The following facts should cause grave concern. Since the indefinite extension of the NPT, some nuclear-weapon States have claimed the right to retain nuclear weapons indefinitely. START II has not been ratified; START III is only a glimmer. Even if START II is fully implemented, 10,000 nuclear warheads will remain with the two major nuclear Powers. Under these circumstances, will all the other three nuclear Powers join in the nuclear-disarmament process? Some nuclear weapon States have adopted war-fighting doctrines which envisage the use of nuclear weapons. If conflicts and confrontation resume among the nuclear Powers, it may prove extremely difficult to maintain stable nuclear deterrence in a multipolar world. Nuclear deterrence among the nuclear Powers could also be destabilized if some of them go ahead with the deployment of theatre missile defence systems or anti-satellite systems. This may provoke a new nuclear and missile race and the militarization of outer space.

Under these circumstances, the refusal of some nuclear-weapon States to accept meaningful commitments to achieve nuclear disarmament is inexplicable and unacceptable. We cannot be satisfied by receiving periodic reports of glacial progress in the bilateral nuclear talks. A genuine process of nuclear disarmament pursued and negotiated in the single multilateral forum for disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament, is essential. The measures that the nuclear Powers could be asked to implement have been set out in a number of widely endorsed documents: the Canberra Commission report; the phased programme for nuclear disarmament proposed by a group of 26 countries, including Pakistan, in the Conference on Disarmament; and the proposals outlined in the Dublin declaration of the Group of Eight.

The propulsion of technology and political ambition threatens to militarize outer space. Nuclear weapons are prohibited from this environment; now we must prohibit all weapons and military activity from outer space. Pakistan will press for the creation of an ad hoc committee of the Conference on Disarmament next year to negotiate a legally binding instrument for the preservation of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Next year an ambitious work programme is envisaged in negotiating a protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention. We fully support the conclusion of the protocol before the next review conference of the Biological Weapons Convention. However, agreement is more likely to result from the demonstration of greater flexibility by certain major countries rather than merely from more negotiating time. The consensus must reflect genuine commitment to the technical cooperation and assistance envisaged under article X of the Biological Weapons Convention.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention revealed the unpleasant reality of our neighbour's clandestine chemical weapons programme, despite the solemn Pakistan-India declaration of 1992 that neither possessed chemical weapons. We urge that a programme be worked out for the urgent destruction of India's chemical-weapon stocks under close international scrutiny. We also urge that the host of issues that remained outstanding in the Preparatory Commission should be resolved expeditiously by the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention.

Pakistan agrees that it is essential to devote greater attention to restraining the build-up of conventional weapons, regionally and globally. But let us not merely disarm the unarmed. We must adopt a comprehensive approach with simultaneous efforts to address the three main aspects of the problems posed by conventional armaments.

First, we should evolve national and international measures to arrest the increasing lethality and sophistication of conventional weapons, which increase suffering and, equally important, intensify the concentration of destructive power in the hands of a few militarily and technologically advanced Powers.

Secondly, we should evolve agreements to prevent the creation of serious arms imbalances in the regions of tension and conflict. One step could be the adoption of a framework for conventional disarmament and arms control at the regional and subregional level. Such a framework could incorporate guidelines, *inter alia*, to prevent the possibility of a surprise military attack, promote equilibrium in defence capabilities between potential adversaries and so forth.

Thirdly, we should develop procedures for the regulation of the transfer of armaments, including small arms. Such transfers should be restrained where serious arms imbalances already exist, without prejudice to the legitimate right of States to self-defence and the right of peoples to self-determination.

Due to its need to deter and delay a conventional attack along its long and tense frontiers, Pakistan cannot now adhere to the Ottawa treaty. But we are in the process of ratifying Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which we believe will address most of the humanitarian problems relating to anti-personnel landmines. Pakistan has played an active role in demining operations, including in Kuwait, Cambodia, Bosnia and

Angola. We reiterate our call for a vigorous global demining programme, especially in war-ravaged countries such as Afghanistan.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Final Document of the first specialsession devoted to disarmament. It remains the only comprehensive consensus document on disarmament negotiated and agreed by the entire United Nations membership. In the transformed circumstances of the post-cold-war period, it would be timely for this Assembly to convene another special session, at the end of 1999, to build a new disarmament consensus to coincide with the dawn of the new century and the new millennium.

Mr. Mahugu (Kenya): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election. I wish to assure you of my delegation's support in the work of this Committee.

There are many urgent issues relevant to the work of this Committee that need our attention, be they in the field of nuclear disarmament, conventional disarmament or disarmament and development. Progress has been made in many areas. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) recently received a new lease on life, while the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty already has 150 States signatories, including my own country. The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on anti-personnel landmines, which recently received its fortieth ratification, are other cases in point.

However, in these and other areas, a lot more needs to be done. The illicit transfer of conventional arms continues unabated, and toxic and radioactive wastes continue to find their way to our shores, while the insecurity linked to poverty and underdevelopment continues to haunt us.

The last 12 months will be remembered for the progress made towards the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, an issue of extreme importance which has been a source of anguish to the entire international community, and most particularly to Africa.

Kenya looks forward to the entry into force on 1 March 1999 of the landmines Convention and applauds the demonstration of international resolve to ban those indiscriminate weapons, as reflected by the speedy ratification of the Convention. In Africa, landmines have had a devastating effect, mutilating and killing civilians, especially innocent women and children, and rendering whole agricultural areas physically uninhabitable and economically unproductive. It is therefore appropriate that Mozambique, a country that has endured and continues to endure tremendous suffering from this scourge, should provide the venue for the first meeting of the States parties to the Convention in May 1999, and for that we are grateful to the Government of Mozambique. It is our fervent hope that countries such as Mozambique and Angola will become the first beneficiaries of the remarkable international effort that we anticipate being made to rid the world of anti-personnel landmines and make their victims productive members of their communities. Like many in Africa, Kenya looks forward to a time when the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of all kinds of landmines will be a thing of the past.

Similarly, we are concerned about the continuing illicit transfer and use of conventional arms, which constitute a major cause of insecurity in many regions of the world, particularly in developing countries. In this regard, the Secretary-General, in his report to the Security Council of 13 April this year on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318), clearly identified the proliferation of conventional arms as an issue that needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency by the international community. In paragraph 28 of the report, the Secretary-General stated,

> "The goal of public identification of international arms merchants and their activities has proved elusive, but perhaps no other single initiative would do more to help combat the flow of illicit arms to Africa — a trade that is made possible largely by the secrecy that surrounds it."

The critical role and responsibility of countries manufacturing and exporting these weapons cannot be overemphasized. We support the Secretary-General's call, also in paragraph 28 of the report, for restraint "in supplying weapons especially to areas of actual or potential conflict". In that connection, we note the work currently under way in the Council in support of the Secretary-General's call and hope that the call will be heeded.

The dumping of radioactive and toxic wastes on the shores and in the waters of some developing countries remains a cause of concern to all of us. The tragedy therein is twofold. One aspect is that a section of our global village produces more waste than it can treat, and chooses insensitively to dump it elsewhere. The second is that the dumping ground is totally unprepared to handle such wastes in terms both of technological know-how, which it desperately lacks, and of resources, which it does not have. In addition, the indiscriminate nature of the dumping of hazardous wastes causes untold harm to the environment, livelihoods and health of the people. There is clearly a need to address this issue urgently and comprehensively. In 1996, Kenya welcomed as a step in the right direction the amendment to the Basel Convention, adopted in Geneva, that prohibits the export of such wastes from countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to non-OECD countries, and stressed that more needed to be done. That continues to be our position today.

The nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan will no doubt be remembered as having dealt a serious blow to our aspirations for a world free of nuclear weapons. It is indeed regrettable that the insecurity created as a result of the lack of serious commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to move towards disarmament has provided an excuse for others, who may have felt the need to ensure their own security, to test. Unfortunate though their actions may be, a wake-up call has most definitely been sounded.

To this end, the need for security assurances for the non-nuclear-weapon States and an even more urgent need for renewed efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons must be stressed. We look to the nuclear-weapon States to start the ball rolling. The rest of us expect them to seriously take on their responsibilities of finally removing the threat of nuclear weapons, which, even with the end of the cold war, continues to hang over our heads.

It is Kenya's conviction that no testing of any kind should be carried out and that all tests pose a threat to all of us by increasing the chances of proliferation and, indeed, of an arms race. In this regard, we welcome the renewed commitment contained in the Geneva Communiqué of the five declared nuclear-weapon States, which, *inter alia*, expressed their determination to fulfil their commitments relating to nuclear disarmament under article VI of the NPT.

We attach great importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as an exceptionally important global mechanism for addressing nuclear non-proliferation issues. The NPT, together with regional measures, such as the Treaties of Pelindaba, Rarotonga, Tlatelolco and Bangkok, fortify the commitment of the international community to nuclear disarmament. For our part, we would like to reaffirm our belief in regional arrangements as a useful means of reducing tension, encouraging sustainable socio-economic development, promoting confidence and enhancing regional stability and security. Such agreements encourage peaceful uses of nuclear technology and should, to that extent, become vehicles for the transfer of technology. We express the conviction that nuclear technology will play an instrumental role in the socio-economic sphere and in this regard look forward to the Sixth NPT Review Conference with anticipation and, indeed, hope.

In the same vein, Kenya welcomes the efforts under way towards negotiating an international instrument on fissile material cut-off. We welcome the establishment of an ad hoc committee to work towards negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable instrument. Such an instrument would have to be truly comprehensive and address the concerns of those of us who believe that our common security lies in, among other factors, a nuclear-free world. For that and other reasons, Kenya strongly supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

In conclusion, it is clear that any achievements in the field of disarmament, both nuclear and conventional, will allow us to focus on more crucial matters pertaining to our socio-economic development. We must all make concerted efforts to break the cycle of poverty and tackle the debt burden that engulfs us and greatly compounds the breakdown of law and order, promotes ethnic strife and causes conflicts in many parts of the world.

We should not allow massive resources to continue to be diverted to armaments. Disarmament should free resources for development purposes, as was intended. Let us all strive towards that end as we approach the next millennium.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): For half a century the United Nations has been travelling the path of progressively establishing the bases of an international system that should be able to ensure the collective security of all of our States. The efforts made for general, complete and verified disarmament represent an important achievement of this common will to strengthen international security.

Although significant progress has been achieved in this area over the past decade, particularly with regard to the reduction and elimination of weapons of mass destruction, we are nevertheless obliged to note that global disarmament remains a long-term objective.

My country considers that, in addition to the potential for destruction represented by nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, serious problems of security are also associated with conventional weapons in many conflicts and tensions raging in the world, particularly in Africa.

In this respect, my delegation feels that it is the duty of the international community to devote particular attention to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, whose circulation in Africa has become a real scourge. These weapons not only threaten the security and stability of African States but also represent a major obstacle to the building and consolidation of social peace and of the democratic process, without which no economic and social development policy on the African continent is conceivable.

That is why my country, along with many African countries, is of the view that absolute priority should be given to the strategies and initiatives aimed at combating the proliferation of these small arms and to eliminate their sale and traffic, particularly in conflict areas.

In this context, my delegation welcomes in particular the proposals contained in the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which suggests to the international community a certain number of paths that are likely to lead to a reduction in the uncontrolled spread of these weapons.

Along these same lines, my delegation would like to note the efforts being made by the member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to achieve a regional moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of light weapons. In this respect, substantial progress was made at the joint meeting at Banjul in July last of the ministers of defence, ministers of the interior and ministers of security. That meeting considered a draft mechanism for ECOWAS for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts and for peacekeeping and security. The ministers unanimously adopted at the end of the meeting a declaration on the moratorium whose modalities for implementation will be adopted at the next ECOWAS Summit, planned for Abuja at the end of the month.

Clearly this moratorium, whose duration has not yet been determined, is but one step towards the goal of a reduction in the traffic in these small arms, pending a substantial and harmonized response from the international community with a view to establishing an effective mechanism to combat illicit traffic and effectively to control the movement of these weapons.

Despite the considerable mobilization today in Africa to combat the danger posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, it remains clear that Africa alone cannot deal with it. Hence the particular interest that my country attaches to the various initiatives being taken at the international level to control the excessive buildup and uncontrolled use of these weapons. In this context, my delegation is pleased to stress the efforts being made jointly by Norway and Canada to intensify and harmonize actions in a consistent and effective way. My country also supports the proposal of the Swiss Government to host a conference under the auspices of the United Nations on the illicit traffic of weapons.

A few weeks ago the international community welcomed the deposit of the fortieth instrument of ratification on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. My country, which deposited its instruments of ratification a few days later, is pleased with this event, which represents a significant milestone towards a world free of anti-personnel landmines.

The entry into force of this Convention illustrates the firm resolve of the community of nations to resolve the humanitarian issues raised by these cowardly weapons. My country pays tribute to the Government of the fraternal country of Mozambique for its proposal to host the first meeting of States parties in May 1999 at Maputo. No other continent has experienced the devastating and painful effects of these indiscriminate weapons to the same extent as Africa.

Nuclear disarmament, as well as questions linked to non-proliferation, continue to be a source of major concern for the entire international community. Even so, it is clear that in this respect we have taken important steps — indeed, seen significant breakthroughs — on the path towards the effective elimination of these weapons of mass destruction. These successes can be attributed to the commitment and sustained political will of the great majority of the States Members of our Organization. Thanks to this new universal awareness, many agreements and conventions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation have been concluded, thus opening up the encouraging prospect of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Along these lines, the Conference on Disarmament, of which my country is a member, which has long been bogged down in fruitless considerations, finally agreed this year to begin to negotiate the outlines of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

My delegation strongly hopes that these negotiations will lead to a rapid conclusion of the treaty, thus making it possible to achieve the goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It is also in this spirit that my country is pleased with the commitments made by the Governments of India and Pakistan to accede to the nuclear disarmament regime. We also welcome Brazil's decision to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Senegal has always given utmost priority to our common objective of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, because it has always been and remains an active supporter of the transfer of the vast wealth swallowed up by the arms race to sustainable development activities. Promoting the development of poor nations thanks to the disarmament dividend should be our aspiration and should motivate us further in our collective undertaking to build a world of peace and progress.

My country remains convinced that with our determination and our joint efforts, we will be able to make this qualitative leap for the security of humankind on the eve of the third millennium.

The Chairman: I should like to raise two points in the interest of the smooth operation of the Committee's work.

First, to date the Secretariat has received only three draft resolutions. I should like to appeal to delegations to submit draft resolutions to the Secretariat as soon as possible before the deadline set for submission — Friday, 23 October.

I am appealing particularly to those delegations introducing draft resolutions under traditional agenda items and those that may entail financial implications. The sooner the Secretariat receives draft resolutions, the quicker they can be processed and the requisite financial implications researched and reproduced. In that way we will be able to avoid a logjam at the end of this week.

Secondly, I should like to remind delegations of the deadlines for the submission of draft resolutions. As members know, draft resolutions under all disarmament and international security items — that is, 63-79 — are due by 1 p.m. this coming Friday, 23 October.

Draft resolutions under agenda item 80, dealing with the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee, are due by 6 p.m. this Friday.

In this connection, I should like to underline that the agreed deadlines for submission of draft resolutions will be strictly observed. I have requested the Secretariat to enforce them strictly.

Moreover, as members will recall, our programme of work calls for thematic discussion on all items and the introduction of draft resolutions to begin on Friday, 23 October, at the scheduled 3 p.m. meeting. During the second phase of our work, I would strongly encourage delegations to avoid making new general statements. The meaning of last year's reform is precisely that. During that phase, the discussion should follow the existing repartition in clusters.

In that connection also, allow me to appeal to delegations to take advantage of that meeting to introduce draft resolutions, especially traditional ones, so that we can make optimum use of the time available to us.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

United Nations

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General Assembly

Fifty-third session

First Committee

11th Meeting
Tuesday, 20 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . (Belgium)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Laptsenak (Belarus), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Saliba (Malta): Let me say at the outset how pleased we are at the election of Ambassador Mernier to the chairmanship of this important Committee. His wide experience and knowledge will certainly encourage us to conclude our work successfully. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

As we take stock of the progress made in recent years on the items on our agenda, we can say that significant steps forward have been taken. Confidence and trust between two former adversaries have replaced the hostility and animosity that dominated global politics for nearly half a century. Their continuing efforts to foster cooperation in the realm of international and regional security, as reflected in their recent joint statement of principles, are most welcome. However, we join others in urgently calling on the Russian Federation to ratify the START II Treaty as soon as possible, in order to enable negotiations to begin and be concluded on a START III treaty.

The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the adoption and signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are another two major steps forward towards the establishment of a solid and credible non-proliferation regime. The ratification of the CTBT by two nuclear-Power States sends a promising signal. We welcome their commitment to adhere to the provisions of that Treaty and urge other nuclear-weapon and nuclear-capable States to follow suit.

The consolidation of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and the recent initiative to establish another nuclear-free zone in Central Asia are concrete and important strides in the promotion of the non-proliferation regime. We must continue to foster the confidence among nations that is necessary to enable such zones to be established in other regions, such as South Asia and the Middle East.

It is also encouraging that agreement was finally reached this year in the Conference on Disarmament on enabling negotiations to begin on a fissile materials cut-off treaty. The early conclusion of such a treaty would certainly add value to the non-proliferation regime and to the nuclear disarmament agenda. Equally encouraging was the establishment of an ad hoc committee to discuss negative security assurances. My country has always maintained that nuclear-weapon States must exhibit restraint not only vis-à-vis one another but also, and especially, vis-à-vis non-nuclear-weapon States. Such restraint must be coupled with security assurances, which we feel need to be further strengthened, including through an international legally binding instrument.

In sharp contrast to these assuring developments were the nuclear tests carried out recently by two non-signatories to the NPT and the CTBT. Such disturbing actions only fuel insecurity and mistrust and seriously hamper progress

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in the spheres of non-proliferation and disarmament. Like others, we of course welcome the declared intent of both India and Pakistan to adhere to the CTBT. However, we, like others, urge that such declarations of intent be matched by unconditional and concrete actions. We appeal to them to refrain from more nuclear tests and from development or deployment of nuclear weapons and nuclear-capable missiles. We urge them strongly, as indeed we urge all countries that have not yet done so, to take the bold step of signing and ratifying the CTBT and the NPT as soon as possible.

In this context, we welcome the recent ratification of the NPT by Brazil. We remain unequivocal in our belief that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and that its feasibility can be guaranteed only by faithful compliance with all its provisions. We also note with interest the proposal aimed at creating a nuclear-weapon-free world, being put forward by a coalition of eight countries. This may well be a timely initiative, but its success depends on a solid, true and clear commitment by all to achieve this ultimate objective.

While more States are renouncing the development and use of chemical and biological weapons, the dangers of the clandestine development of these weapons are ever present. This is particularly so given that the technology for their acquisition and use is relatively easy to develop. We strongly appeal to States to refrain from developing such weapons of mass destruction and to destroy those that they already have.

Universal adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention and to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention must become a reality. As a member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Malta intends to give its share to strengthen that Organization and to ensure the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We also attach great importance to the reinforcement of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention through a legally binding protocol establishing a verification and compliance regime.

The nuclear disarmament agenda must be kept on track even while we must accept the realization that non-proliferation cannot be taken for granted. Neither can we dismiss the spectre of nuclear terrorism. We strongly believe that nuclear export controls — in particular the control of dual-use materials and equipment — are an integral aspect of the non-proliferation regime. Having survived the threat of nuclear annihilation for nearly 50 years, no effort, however small or incremental, must be spared to ensure universal adherence to and compliance with the relevant treaties covering not only nuclear weapons, but also weapons of mass destruction. Our collective commitment must be unequivocal.

In this context, let me add that the Conference on Disarmament continues to play an important role in strengthening and consolidating multilateral principles for disarmament. However, we are disappointed that once again we have failed to see agreement on important and outstanding issues of its agenda, as well as on the big issue of expansion of its membership. On the point of membership, let me say that since nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are issues that affect each and every one of us, my country strongly feels that everyone should be able to play an active role in such multilateral forums.

Throughout the 50-odd years of the Organization's existence, a significant portion of our attention has for good reason focused on weapons of mass destruction. The spectre of nuclear holocaust and the potential annihilating and destructive potential of other weapons of mass destruction evoke great terror in our imagination. Yet, while being ever-vigilant in our efforts to ensure that such nightmarish visions remain only in the realm of the imagination, we cannot close our eyes to the suffering and devastation that is caused by the use of conventional weapons, including light weapons and small arms. The unspeakable atrocities that are being committed every day — even now, as we speak — in the various conflicts across the world cannot but spur us to action.

It has been said that men do not fight because they have arms; they have arms because they deem it necessary to fight. Certainly, it is the root cause of conflict that must be eliminated. However, one cannot reject outright the reality that the availability and accessibility of weapons and arms, including their illicit transfer, precipitates and prolongs conflicts. It is incumbent upon us to redouble our efforts to ensure that the sale and spread of all types of conventional weapons and small arms is brought under tight control.

The urgency is even more apparent when we consider the intricate linkage between the sale and supply of arms and other areas of political, social and economic disruption and destabilization, namely, international crime, drug-trafficking and terrorism. These phenomena are compounded further by the strengthening of international criminal networks through the misuse of information technology. No Government can afford to be complacent, and we must try to find global solutions to these global problems.

An important feature of international cooperation in disarmament is the means to secure a world free from want, fear and terror. Reducing the demand for weapons is as important as reducing the supply. It is vital that we collectively endeavour to foster a culture of peace, both within and among nations; that we effectively address the complex issues of disarmament and development; and that we continue to support post-conflict peace-building, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in war-torn areas.

We agree with the Secretary-General, writing in his annual report on the work of the Organization, that there is an urgent need to seek to build a global consensus on monitoring and controlling illicit arms transfers. Malta therefore supports in principle the convening of a United Nations conference in the near future on all aspects of the illicit arms trade. This would certainly be an important step forward in our efforts to secure a world free from conflict and fear.

Malta also fully supports the initiatives that the Department for Disarmament Affairs is planning to take to curb the proliferation of small arms. At this point, let me say how pleased we are to see the re-establishment of that Department under the able leadership of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has contributed much in fostering greater openness and transparency in military matters. It enhances mutual confidence and trust among nations and promotes progress towards disarmament. Malta supported the creation of the Register from the beginning. We continue to support efforts to further develop the Register in order to make it more effective and to secure the widest possible participation.

Other cooperative measures help promote the culture of peace, both within and beyond national boundaries — such as those envisaged in the resolution on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures, the European Union code of conduct on arms exports and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

While on the subject of conventional weapons, I would be remiss not to make special reference to the adoption last year of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines. Malta was among the first to sign the Convention, and it is now working on the process of ratification. We join others in saluting its entry into force in March next year. We also welcome the entry into force this coming December of the amended Protocol II, constituting a partial ban on landmines, to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The role of the United Nations in demining activities and the general support of Member States in this important area, such as that provided by the European Union, are commendable and worthy of our continued support.

Malta attaches particular importance to achieving progress in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. These are crucial elements in the maintenance of peace and the strengthening of international security. We believe that our objectives and activities can be most effectively implemented if combined within the sphere of activities of specialized regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and other forums. Regional organizations such as the OSCE can and do play an important role in early warning mechanisms, confidence- and security-building measures, preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peace-building. Regional organizations also have a complementary role to play in the broader aspects of security, including the economic, social and humanitarian dimensions and the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

It is therefore encouraging for us to see that the Secretary-General is committed to continuing his efforts to consolidate links with the OSCE and to create a real partnership with a more structured, rational and cost-effective division of labour between regional organizations and the United Nations. This is recognition that regional efforts at confidence-and security-building can only have a broader and positive impact on the wider international playing field.

It is our firm conviction that confidence-building measures can foster peace and security at the global and regional levels when accompanied by cooperative measures in the political, economic, social and other fields. Malta has therefore always been very assiduous in its efforts to promote peace and cooperation in the Mediterranean. The recognition of the need for interlocking and reciprocally reinforcing institutions and mechanisms has encouraged us to promote a wide-ranging cooperative policy for the Mediterranean. As stated by my Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs in his address to the General Assembly last month,

> "Stability in the Mediterranean must rest on multiple initiatives that nurture cooperation through gradual confidence- and security-building measures. This is the crux of our insistence on the need to establish a stability pact for the region. Initiatives such as the addition of a parliamentary dimension to this process of dialogue, promoted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the setting up of a council or forum of Mediterranean States and the eventual creation of a conference on security and cooperation in the Mediterranean deserve serious consideration." *(A/53/PV.19, p. 5)*

The Euro-Mediterranean process is an important factor in common efforts to address root causes of tension and conflict while building understanding and trust through mutual cooperation in the political, security, economic, financial, social and cultural fields. Malta has always played an active role in the Euro-Mediterranean process, a role that can only be enhanced through our eventual membership in the European Union.

Our agenda remains, as always, quite a challenging and even daunting one. However, we must be resolute in working towards our common goal of achieving a secure, peaceful and just world. My Government, for its part, remains fully committed to playing its part, not only in this Committee but also in all other related forums.

Mr. Al-Ahmed (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like to congratulate the Chairman and the other officers of the First Committee on their election. I would like to convey the confidence of the delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that they will use their experience and wisdom to conduct the work of this Committee so as to achieve what all of us in the international community seek in the disarmament field. I would also like to assure them that our delegation will lend its support and cooperation so that this work can be successfully completed.

We are holding our meetings in an environment of intensified international and regional efforts to achieve goals that inspire hope and optimism: to raise international awareness of the need for complete disarmament, including the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. The end of the cold war has reduced the danger of the possible use of such weapons. It has also created a new reality in which there is no longer any need for retaining nuclear arsenals or security systems based on competing military alliances and nuclear-deterrence policies.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is following with interest the efforts aimed at the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including the Arabian Gulf. It participated constructively in the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which was held in New York. It is also supporting the efforts of the League of Arab States, in accordance with the call made at its 101st session, to make that sensitive part of the world a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological.

In this regard, we are deeply concerned about Israel's refusal to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as about its maintaining its nuclear programme outside international control. This represents a grave threat to the security and stability of the region.

While we completely object to the double standards practised by the international community — which exclude Israel from the efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and thus encourage the arms race — we are also concerned about the nuclear tests in South Asia, first by India and then by Pakistan. All of this threatens peace and security in the region.

Although we believe in strengthening the effectiveness of the NPT through activating the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency by making it more international, we also believe there is a need to establish regulations that will help in achieving the required progress in all aspects of eliminating weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with United Nations resolution 1 (I) of 1946.

Thus, we urge all the countries that have not yet joined the NPT to take the necessary steps to do so. They should also subject their nuclear facilities to international control. All of this will enhance international security and stability.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports transparency in armaments as one of the means of consolidating international peace and security. It also believes that for transparency to succeed, it must follow definite, clear, balanced, universal and non-discriminatory principles — principles that we believe will strengthen national, regional and international security for all countries in accordance with international law.

In this regard, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms represents a first attempt by the international community to deal with transparency on such a scale. Despite the Register's potential value in increasing transparency and thereby building global confidence, along with its value as a first and reliable early warning mechanism, it has encountered a number of problems. The most noticeable problem is that more than half of the United Nations Member States have consistently refrained from submitting data to the Register. This should prompt us to deal effectively with the concerns of these States to increase international participation in the Register.

In this regard, my country reaffirms the response of the members of the League of Arab States to the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/312, of 28 August 1997, entitled "United Nations Register of Conventional Arms". That response, issued in accordance with resolution 46/36 L, which established the Register, affirms that an expanded Register including information on advanced conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, and high technology with military applications would represent a more balanced, more comprehensive and less discriminatory instrument attracting a larger number of participants.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is committed to the United Nations Charter and to the principles of international legality, which represent a basic foundation of its foreign policy. It is particularly interested in strengthening the role of the United Nations in all aspects of international peace and security and disarmament. Those issues constitute an indivisible requirement for the world to live in peace and stability.

In this regard, I should like to reaffirm the importance of consolidating and strengthening the United Nations in the field of disarmament. This is a collective objective, requiring coordination between the work of the First Committee and that of the Disarmament Commission in order to unify international efforts to achieve complete and total disarmament.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the willingness of my delegation to cooperate with all the members of the Committee and to participate actively in considering all the items before us so as to strengthen our aspirations to establish security and peace in the international community for the well-being of all humankind.

Mr. Hashim (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): As this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor in the First Committee at this session, I should like to congratulate Mr. Mernier on his election as Chairman, and I wish him and the other members of the Bureau complete success in the discharge of their mandate.

The purpose of creating the United Nations 50 years ago was to save humanity from the scourge of war in the aftermath of the Second World War and to establish an international order based on justice to ensure the security of humankind. Bearing in mind the necessity for international cooperation in eliminating weapons of mass destruction, Bahrain has ratified several international conventions in this field, including the 1993 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Bahrain supports the setting up of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which should also be free from weapons of mass destruction, because we want to live in peace and security in the region. We believe that the position of Israel, which refuses to subscribe to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and rejects the controls of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), refusing to place its installations under IAEA safeguards, impels other countries to develop such weapons and engenders an arms race that imperils peace and security. That is why we call upon the international community to exert pressure on Israel to accede to that Treaty.

Bahrain is a party to the NPT. We believe that it must become universal, without exception. It deserves our respect.

We support international efforts to draft a convention prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT are entitled to legally binding safeguards, which should be set out in a multilateral instrument. Weapons of mass destruction prevent the enjoyment of security by all countries on an equal footing, as provided for in the Charter. Such weapons have definitely become a means of exerting pressure on and blackmailing countries that do not possess them. That is why my delegation appeals to the Ad Hoc Committee on international terrorism established by resolution 51/210 to elaborate a convention to prohibit nuclear terrorism, and calls for the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Bahrain followed with interest the meetings in Ottawa in 1997 leading to the Convention on the Prohibition of the

Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which will be entering into force in March 1999. Landmines threaten the lives of millions of people in the world.

We also support efforts aimed at elaborating a convention against small arms and light weapons, because they are a factor of instability in many parts of the world. We are in favour of international cooperation to limit weapons of mass destruction. That is one of the ongoing objectives of the United Nations, and it is all the more important as we stand at the threshold of the third millennium, hoping to achieve an international order based on the rejection of war and peaceful cooperation among all nations.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations, namely, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me first join other delegations in congratulating Mr. Mernier and other members of the Bureau on their election. The Chairman has the challenging task of brokering our exchange and action on vital issues affecting international peace and security. We are confident that his skill will bring the work of this important Committee to a successful conclusion. I offer him our full cooperation and support. I must also express the appreciation of the CARICOM delegations to Mr. Nkgowe of Botswana for his able chairmanship of this Committee during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

This year's report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, document A/53/1, records a disturbing increase in regional conflicts and other events which undermine international peace and security. These developments have direct implications for the work of this Committee, for where there is war there is unquenched demand for the weapons of war. Our responsibility is to ensure that through the regimes and arrangements to which we adhere, by our demonstrated commitment to non-proliferation and arms control and through genuine efforts to promote confidence-building through transparency and verification of action, we will ultimately create a safer world for ourselves and for generations to come.

CARICOM States are heartened by the fact that the international community has been giving increased attention to the issue of small arms. In recent years we have witnessed significant growth in both illegal trade and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Estimates are that there are about 100 million such weapons in circulation across the world, and there exists an inestimable capacity for their continued production. The ready availability and ease in accumulation and dissemination of these weapons are important factors in the escalation of regional and internal conflicts and in the undermining of peacekeeping activities.

The Secretary-General's report on Africa, document A/52/871, identifies the proliferation of illegal arms as a major factor hampering the achievement of durable peace in that region, and the report also underscores a need to combat the illicit arms trade in Africa as a matter of urgency.

The threat posed by the increase in the illegal traffic in small arms is particularly troubling to nations of the Caribbean. The dangerous combination of criminal activity involving illicit traffic in drugs and guns has had devastating effects on our small, vulnerable, open societies, undermining the security and stability of our States and the safety of our populations.

The proliferation of small arms therefore plays a part not only in the undermining of regional and international peace and security; it also contributes directly to the erosion of national security and the destabilization of civil society. There can be no doubt that the use and abuse of small arms by far results in the greatest loss of life and incidence of injury on a daily basis worldwide.

Clearly, the time has come for the international community to address this problem urgently, aggressively and comprehensively. We emphasize the fact that there are no national or regional boundaries delimiting illegal traffic in these weapons. We believe that stronger measures should be meted out against illegal exporters from the main areas of manufacture as well as to the importers of illegal small arms. This problem is truly multinational in nature, involving both the arms-producing and arms-purchasing countries. Without a coordinated approach, little can be achieved.

Effective control of small arms therefore demands an approach that goes beyond the traditional instruments of disarmament and arms control. We support the conclusion of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms that what is needed is "a balanced approach of prevention and reduction" involving action at all levels —

the global, the regional and the local. In this the United Nations also has an important role to play. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the issue of small arms (A/53/207), which catalogues important initiatives already being pursued in this area.

In this context, we note with satisfaction the progress made during the past year on the proposed moratorium on the manufacture, import and export of light weapons in West Africa. We look forward to receiving next year from the United Nations group of Experts on Small Arms recommendations on measures which we hope the international community as a whole can consider for implementation.

What is particularly encouraging, too, is the increased dialogue on a study of this pressing issue. We note with much satisfaction, for example, the Oslo meeting addressing an international agenda on small arms held in July of this year, which sought a common understanding among a group of developed and developing countries on the complexities of the problem and the urgency with which these issues should be addressed. We congratulate the Governments of Norway and Canada for their leadership in this initiative, which we hope will be a catalyst for future action by the wider international community.

We welcome also the special information session on small arms held here at United Nations Headquarters in September and offer our continued support for the Mali proposal for a moratorium on the manufacture, export and import of light weapons in West Africa.

CARICOM States also attach substantial importance to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, adopted by the Organization of American States in November 1997. We consider that this instrument provides a comprehensive framework for regional cooperative action to control the illegal production of and traffic in small arms. We welcome the Secretary-General's endorsement of the Convention and commend it to the consideration of other regions and the wider international community.

We join the call for the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade and note the offer of the Government of Switzerland to host such a meeting under United Nations auspices in the year 2000.

Another important area in conventional arms control which deserves our continued vigilance is the production, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines. We welcome the deposit on 16 September of the fortieth instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, adopted in Ottawa last December, as a significant step towards the achievement of our desired goal. We urge all States that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention, and we look forward to its entry into force on 1 March 1999.

The lack of progress on disarmament-related issues recorded at the Conference on Disarmament this year demonstrates, in the view of our delegations, insufficient investment of political will. We note in particular the lack of agreement on the initiation of negotiations on a time-bound framework for nuclear disarmament. Also of continuing concern is an evident stagnation in the START process.

Progress in disarmament has at best been disappointing. The nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan during May of this year are a disturbing indication of stalled non-proliferation initiatives. We welcome the expressed intent of both countries during the recent General Assembly debate to sign the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and we note with some satisfaction that more than 140 countries have signed the Treaty. CARICOM delegations consider that this instrument is integral part to the effectiveness of a non-proliferation regime. We therefore urge all States which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

The lack of progress in the work of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in our view also demonstrates inadequate political will. We call on the nuclear-weapon States in particular to make every effort to strengthen the preparatory process with a view to enhancing the NPT regime. The NPT, with 186 States parties and its current indefinite extension, undoubtedly offers the best hope for achievement of universality in nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

For this to be achieved, however, we must first work towards ensuring universality in participation. We therefore encourage those nations which remain outside of the membership of the NPT to consider accession to the Treaty, and we welcome the eight new accessions to the regime since its last review in 1995.

An important aspect of our international disarmament agenda is the ongoing effort to reduce and ultimately eliminate the production and stockpiling of fissile material used to produce nuclear weapons. The conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty should be an integral part of our overall non-proliferation strategy. We therefore join the call for the commencement of negotiations on a non-discriminatory and universally applicable convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

The environmental risk inherent in the movement of nuclear waste is an issue of primary concern to the member States of the Caribbean Community. The threat of contamination during the shipment of radioactive material is very real and has profound and lasting implications for the viability of the fragile marine and island ecosystems that characterize our nation States. The continued use of Caribbean waters as a route for the transshipment of irradiated reactor fuel therefore remains a matter of grave concern to all CARICOM States. We renew our call to the international community to consider the very valid concerns which we have expressed regarding this practice.

CARICOM delegations recognize the important role which nuclear-weapon-free zones can play in enhancing both global and regional security and non-proliferation. We reaffirm our commitment to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which promotes the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. We call on Member States to recognize and respect the non-proliferation regimes established under the Treaties of Pelindaba, Bangkok and Rarotonga.

We further encourage the creation of mechanisms to facilitate cooperation among all these zones, thereby contributing to the strengthening of an international non-proliferation regime. We also support proposals for the creation of similar regimes in those regions which do not yet have them, particularly in the Middle East and in South Asia.

For more than 10 years, since the 1986 International Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development, the international community has impassively acknowledged the importance of peace and stability as essential prerequisites for economic and social development and paid lip service to the notion of investing the proceeds diverted from arms proliferation in human development. The disarmament for development initiative has achieved little over the years because insufficient attention has been given to the dividend in peace and stability gained through development.

CARICOM States believe that the time has come for us to inject new life into this initiative. We take note of the report of the Secretary-General and look forward to revitalized efforts in implementing the action programme adopted by the International Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development. We also strongly urge the early convening of the fourth special session devoted to disarmament and call on Member States to demonstrate the political will required to reach agreement on the objectives and agenda of that session.

Finally, CARICOM States underscore the integral role which the United Nations should play in the strengthening of institutional arrangements at the multilateral level. We therefore welcome the reestablishment and reorganization of the Department of Disarmament Affairs and express our hope that these changes will result in more effective mobilization of international action in the pursuit of global disarmament and security.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Allow me at the outset to convey to Mr. Mernier my delegation's warmest congratulations on his election to the chairmanship of this Committee. We are confident that, with his broad experience and skills, he will lead our Committee's work to a fruitful conclusion, to which end my delegation pledges its full support and cooperation.

I should also like to avail myself of this opportunity to convey through him my delegation's deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe of Botswana, for the excellent way in which he conducted this Committee's work at its previous session.

As we begin the work of the First Committee this year, it is important in our opinion that we draw a picture as to where we stand in the field of arms control and disarmament. In the course of our debate, many of us have described in apocalyptic terms the present overall situation following the developments that have occurred in a certain region of the world. Others, in a more patient tone, have sought to look into the reality as it stood and were determined to find a wise response to it. In the view of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the overall picture is surely not bright. There are nevertheless some areas in which positive developments have taken place, thereby giving some glimmer of hope for a safer place to live in. Let us consider some of these areas.

The United States of America and the Russian Federation, for the first time in the history of their relations, have, under START I, reduced their nuclear arsenals. In this context, we only wish to see those two major nuclear-weapon States proceed to further reductions under START II and, eventually, START III, as soon as possible. The declared intention to reduce and ultimately eliminate all nuclear weapons, as set forth in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is most welcome, but we remind them that deeds alone are what count. One should not simply stop after having gained positive results. Indeed, it is urgent to move on and accomplish the noble task that lies ahead — the total elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session three years ago was another major event in United Nations history in the field of disarmament. Although we regretted that the adopted Treaty did not specify a time-bound framework for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons at the global level, we were of the view that the adoption of such a Treaty constituted an important milestone that would lead to a gradual achievement of nuclear disarmament. In our opinion, despite its imperfections, the CTBT, if sincerely and strictly implemented, will help prevent the non-nuclear-weapon States from acquiring these weapons of mass destruction and, more importantly, the nuclear-weapon States from improving their nuclear stockpiles. That, we believe, is how we can attain the goal of gradual nuclear disarmament. At this year's session, in order to keep the momentum alive, it is important that our Committee reaffirm its unequivocal commitment to the CTBT.

The entry into force on 29 April 1997 of the Chemical Weapons Convention also constituted a positive event in our common effort to free the world from weapons of mass destruction. We welcome the various steps taken by the States parties and by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the implementation of the Convention. In this regard, we wish to underline that every effort should be made in order to pave the way for the effective, full and indiscriminate implementation of the Convention.

Throughout these past years, we have been satisfied to note the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the globe, namely, South-East Asia, Africa, the South Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The establishment of such nuclear-weapon-free zones not only has demonstrated the genuine aspirations of the peoples of the regions concerned to be free from the nuclear threat and/or annihilation, but has also become a powerful and irreversible trend that would lead to the gradual building of a nuclear-free world. This trend deserves strong encouragement and support from us all.

Last April, to our satisfaction, an ad hoc committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices was established by the Conference on Disarmament. We welcome this positive development. We are all the more pleased to see that, after four years of delay, the ad hoc committee will finally be able to begin its work, hopefully at the very beginning of the Conference's 1999 session. In our opinion, the Committee, in considering the draft treaty text, should address not only nuclear non-proliferation measures, but also nuclear disarmament measures, as the two concepts are interrelated, complement one another and should go hand in hand.

At this very moment in history, much is being said about the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). At this session some delegations have even gone so far as to say that the very foundations of the NPT could be undermined by certain events. The issue here revolves around our whole perception of the NPT. As we all know very well, the Treaty has two noble objectives: that the non-nuclear-weapon States must not acquire nuclear weapons, and that the nuclear-weapon States have a clear responsibility to embark on serious negotiations towards the reduction of their nuclear arsenals, leading to their ultimate elimination. Since the entry into force of the NPT in 1970, the non-nuclear-weapon States have all along complained that the nuclear-weapon States are not only keeping their arsenals of nuclear weapons in huge numbers, but are also continuing to enhance the destructive power of those weapons. In response, the nuclear-weapon States have not to date advanced convincing arguments to prove the contrary. As a result, to our deep regret, a difficult situation has arisen. We see that the situation now is all confused.

In view of all this, the future of the NPT could, in our opinion, be at stake. We very much fear that confidence in the Treaty could be eroded. As we move closer to the NPT review conference scheduled to be held in the year 2000, it is most urgent that both non-nuclear-weapon States and, in particular, nuclear-weapon States make further efforts strictly and sincerely to fulfil their obligations under the relevant provisions of the Treaty.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is in favour of strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Our delegation has no objection in principle to discussing issues pertaining to the establishment of a verification regime for the Convention. However, any verification regime for the Convention should be considered fully taking into account the security and economic interests of developing countries parties to the Biological Weapons Convention.

We share the concern at the deadly consequences of the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. The point here is that we must prohibit such indiscriminate use and at the same time recognize the legitimate right of any State to use such weapons in the defence of its national independence and sovereignty. In this regard, we are of the view that, in any arrangements or negotiations to ban landmines, the legitimate national security concerns of States and their legitimate right to use appropriate measures for self-defence, as provided for in the Charter, should be taken into account.

As we examine issues of peace and disarmament, it is important to recognize the role that the United Nations centres for peace and disarmament can play. In fact, they continue to help promote arms control and build confidence and trust among the countries in their respective regions. In that light, our delegation supports the programmes of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, known as the Kathmandu process for disarmament and regional stability. We trust that the United Nations conference on disarmament issues, entitled "Towards a world free from nuclear weapons", to be held in Nagasaki, Japan, in November 1998 will have a positive outcome.

As the Secretary-General said in his remarks at the opening of the Committee's general debate, nuclear disarmament must remain at the top of the agenda of the United Nations and of the world community as a whole. Indeed, the great horrors of the first use ever of nuclear bombs, five decades ago, still remain so vivid in our minds and keep reminding us of the unacceptably huge and destructive nature of these weapons of mass destruction. The international community is therefore duty-bound to do all it can to achieve, within a specified time-frame, the ultimate goal of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons from the face of our planet.

It is our view that, pending the elimination of all nuclear weapons, the nuclear-weapon States should agree on a legally binding international instrument to provide unconditional assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and also on a legally binding international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. Such conditions are essential for all humankind, so that it can feel safe and be protected from a nuclear holocaust.

International arms control and disarmament is intimately linked with international peace and security. It is also a long and complex process. In order to facilitate it, States must build confidence and trust among themselves, through dialogue and cooperation. They should also base their relations on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, which constitute a sound political basis for international peace and security. It is in that spirit that our delegation will continue to cooperate with all other countries and to contribute positively to the promotion of the international disarmament process, so as to ensure peace, stability and cooperation in our world of the new millennium.

The Chairman took the Chair.

Mr. Ople (Philippines): Let me first of all congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, as you begin to lead us and to guide our work in the First Committee. I pledge to you and to the entire Bureau my delegation's full support and cooperation as we proceed with our work at a time when more is demanded of the Committee than ever before.

Allow me to express our deep appreciation as well to Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe, who led us at the last session with efficiency, professionalism, insight and good humour.

Almost a decade has passed since the cold war ended, and we are today at the doorstep of a new millennium. We have achieved much as individual nations and Members of the United Nations and of this Committee, yet the promise of a new era of enduring peace and progress remains largely unrealized. At this session our Committee will meet and conduct its work against a backdrop of complex and profound international events and transformations, events that have brought welcome changes but that have been eclipsed by the problems and difficulties that have forced us to call into question some of the traditional and familiar ways in which we have been addressing the challenges that face us.

Our Committee is called upon to move the cause of disarmament forward so that we can establish a global order where peace prevails and where nations live in harmony, are secure and their sovereignty is respected; where growth and development are rights and not privileges; a world of justice and equality where the individual and his or her rights are respected; a world that protects the earth and that grows and develops only in a manner that will sustain the natural environment.

The clear, big victor at the end of the cold war was the free market. For most of our lives the assault upon the very idea, concept and practice of the free market animated the world's ideological divisions. The market was anathema to an ideology that many then embraced but have now abandoned. Today that ideology is no longer the leading threat to the free market. The success of market-driven globalization is proving to be its own nemesis: today it seems that the free market's worst enemy is itself. Today a third of the world's economies are in recession, with currencies and stock markets plunging in value — from Asia, where the problems started more than a year ago, to Russia and Latin America. During this period — the hard times of the free market and the most critical stage of globalization's growth — the Philippines renews its commitment to the free market and a socially responsible market. The Philippines continues to believe in liberalized trade and refuses to give in to the temptation of reverting to closed markets.

As we approach the new millennium in this globalized era, we continue to be burdened by old animosities and long-standing differences. The end of the cold war, the advances in communications and the prosperity brought by globalization, while contributing to peace among nations, have not served to end bitter rivalries and ethnic and religious strife.

In our region of South-East Asia, elections have been completed in Cambodia. We are hopeful that a stable civilian Government will be able to provide for the needs of the people that elected it.

We do not want an arms race on the Korean peninsula, nor do we want the progress that has been achieved so far in finding a diplomatic solution there to be derailed.

In the South China Sea the peace and stability that has allowed the free movement of goods, which has in turn fuelled progress in my region, continues to prevail. While there are conflicting claims in the South China Sea, we have not allowed this to stand in the way of restoring much stronger economic and political cooperation.

Elsewhere things are not so promising. In the Middle East the peace process remains stalled, with both sides unable to agree on how much West Bank land should be turned over. We are all hopeful that the tragedy in Kosovo will now end. Regional peace talks have not been very successful in halting the Congo's civil war.

The future of most progress in this globalized world, and indeed the very existence of mankind itself, is put in deadly jeopardy by the continued maintenance by some countries of nuclear arsenals, ready-to-fire weapons of mass destruction and the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. The fear and uncertainty these weapons generate are enough to shatter the fragile confidence with which economic and investment risks are taken in our economically integrated world. Fear should have no place in our quest for progress.

The nuclear-weapon States continue to place all of our hard work in peril with their nuclear weapons and doctrine of nuclear deterrence. Nuclear weapons continue to be the single most serious threat to the very existence of mankind. The continued existence of large nuclear arsenals and the network of States that adhere to the perceived protection of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence make the elimination of these weapons more difficult. Ironically, this task has been made even more difficult when two nations from my region, and fellow members of the Non-Aligned Movement, made a decision to succumb to the lure of the nuclear siren. The global effort to rid the world of nuclear weapons consequently suffered a serious setback. The international community should continue to engage both countries and make it clear that nuclear weapons are not acceptable for them or for anyone else.

We must be ready to seek all means and try all measures to address this issue of nuclear weapons. We must not rest until every single nuclear weapon has been eliminated. Whether in the chambers of the International Court of Justice, in the Statute of the International Criminal Court, in the review process of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or in the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament and elsewhere, region by region and hemisphere by hemisphere we must continue to work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is in this spirit that we welcome the initiative of the eight-nation group that issued the joint declaration on creating a nuclear-free world for the First Committee to negotiate a comprehensive and realistic draft resolution of the same title. We hope that that draft resolution, supported by countries across regional lines, will serve as the death-blow for nuclear weapons.

We also support the efforts of Myanmar, which has pioneered a comprehensive approach in its draft resolution on nuclear disarmament.

The Philippines also supports Malaysia's initiative of building on the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* through the draft resolution it has put before our Committee.

We also pledge our continued support to Indonesia, which chairs the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on Disarmament.

In our region, we continue our efforts to engage the nuclear-weapon States to convince them to adhere to the protocol to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.

In the area of landmines, we have been able to use the same developments in technology and communications that have fuelled the globalized world to mobilize global action. The same technology-driven developments sparked the coordinated action of States and non-State actors when it came to dealing with the issue of landmines. Never in the history of disarmament has so much action been taken in so short a time. Within the span of a few years, a global agreement — one of the few that are truly disarmament agreements — has been achieved.

We achieved a major victory with the Ottawa Convention, which establishes a total ban on anti-personnel mines. The Philippines welcomes the fortieth ratification of the Convention and looks forward to its entry into force. Although a lot of work remains, we are confident that the first meeting of States parties will prove to be successful in establishing the mechanisms for the effective implementation of the Ottawa Convention.

In this regard, the Philippines would like to express its gratitude for the offers to provide the resources without which the first meeting of States parties could not become a reality. These offers come from the same States that have from the very beginning provided not only political leadership, but also material support to rid the world of landmines.

Not only should we ensure the effective implementation of the treaty, but we should also continue to locate and clear each and every minefield. Once again, we have to acknowledge the indispensable role played by non-governmental organizations in mine clearance and victim rehabilitation.

In what can only be the dark side of globalization, the very same technology and advances that have spurred the virtual seamlessness and globalization of the world have, tragically, also fostered the illicit trade in small arms. The easy movement of capital and finances, as well as advances in the efficient movement of goods across seas, oceans and borders, has ensured the continued and unfettered illicit traffic and movement of small arms. We must continue to seek ways to address the issue of the illicit transfer and circulation of small arms. The Secretary-General estimated that 90 per cent of those killed or wounded by light military weapons are civilians and that 80 per cent of those were women and children. We need to build a global consensus on monitoring and controlling illicit arms transfers. There have been several informal meetings on this issue, and the Philippines will continue to support any and all efforts to this end.

Terrorists and international criminal syndicates have benefited from globalization too. Taking advantage of modern means of transport and communications, terrorists and international criminal syndicates have established sophisticated means and networks through which they manage their people and their resources. It will take all our concerted efforts and our new understanding of the globalized world in order to eradicate this scourge.

We must make the world smaller for terrorists. We must continue to strengthen multilateral and bilateral cooperation against terrorism. No effort should be spared in our fight against international criminal syndicates, particularly those that deal in drugs and weapons.

Eradicate them we will. We shall destroy these wanton criminals not only where they dwell or dare to go, but also by addressing the roots that give them cause or motivation. We must do all we can to keep illicit weapons out of the hands of terrorists by eliminating these weapons once and for all.

In this regard, the Philippines supports the work being conducted in the Conference on Disarmament on the verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, as well as on the fissile material cut-off treaty.

Needless to say, we hope that the Conference on Disarmament will soon take on the actual task of nuclear disarmament. To aid in that task, the Philippines urges the Conference on Disarmament to decide on the expansion of its membership and to admit the present applicants.

Globalization indeed holds the promise for a new era of peace and prosperity. We must focus our efforts on the specific disarmament tasks before us in order to realize this promise. We must engender a new openness and trust not only within our Organization on the issue of disarmament, but also in dealing with each other as nations. We must, in appropriate circumstances, be more open to hearing the views of others and offering our own, even on issues deemed highly controversial. We must welcome, rather than have misgivings about, sharing our thoughts and ideas.

Globalization in a way makes it very difficult for this not to happen. For today, ideas and thoughts, actions and initiatives, move across borders in ways never before imagined. Ideas about freedom, democracy and the protection of human rights move freely and are impossible to suppress.

In the area of disarmament, armed with the very same tools that created the globalized world, coupled with our own determined resolve, we must therefore make sure that those who resist change and adhere to the immutability of doctrines best left as tragic memories of a bipolar world must find it harder not to be open to the overwhelming desire of the entire world to be free of weapons of mass destruction.

The Millennium Assembly is upon us. We must bring to this critical event proposals and initiatives that will ensure that the next thousand years will be free of weapons of mass destruction and that national conventional arsenals will be filled only to levels reasonably necessary for self-defence. There is no better way to prepare for the Millennium Assembly, in terms of disarmament, than to convene as soon as possible the fourth special session devoted to disarmament.

This openness or willingness to engage others in a flexible manner should never be taken as a sign of weakness. Rather than weakness, a new openness would reflect a boldness with which we should renew the promise of a new era.

Openness has been the key to today's globalized world. Openness need not be feared. Boldness need not be the ill keeper of promises.

Mr. Al-Anbuge (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to associate myself with those who have preceded me in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, and the other officers of the Committee. We hope that under your leadership the Committee will achieve concrete and practical results in its pursuit of complete and total disarmament.

The Final Document (resolution S-10/2) of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, remains the cornerstone of disarmament policy for the international community. The Member States unanimously and clearly defined the priorities of disarmament in a clear manner in paragraph 45 and paragraph 47 of the Final Document:

> "Priorities in disarmament negotiations shall be: nuclear weapons; other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons; conventional weapons, including any which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects; and reduction of armed forces."
>
> "Nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. It is essential to halt and reverse the nuclear arms race in all its aspects in order to avert the danger of war involving nuclear weapons. The ultimate goal in this context is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons."

The extremely destructive character of nuclear weapons should stimulate constant and unstinting efforts to achieve the goal of the complete and total elimination of such weapons. The effects of the first use of nuclear weapons, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, more than half a century ago, are still vivid in our minds. Whole generations in Japan, as well as the conscience of humanity, are still suffering from that experience.

The claim that such weapons are not for use but for deterrence is untenable. The very existence of these weapons poses a serious risk to international peace and security. It is regrettable that the efforts of the international community in this respect have yet to achieve important results and have not led to practical steps towards the elimination of these weapons, despite the great number of General Assembly resolutions, as well as the calls of the international community and the recent judgement of the International Court of Justice.

In order to achieve of the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons we must take practical steps in which regional and international efforts would go hand in hand. Specifically, the nuclear-weapon States should implement their commitments in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and there should be an agreed time-frame for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Until the goal is achieved the nuclear-weapon States should give legally binding assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States that they will not use or threaten to use such weapons against them. The universality of the NPT must be achieved through the accession to the Treaty of all States without exception. We must increase the effectiveness of the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the only international multilateral body able to bring about legally binding instruments in the field of disarmament, especially with regard to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Middle East is currently experiencing a serious situation of military imbalance. Israel is continuing with its policy of expansion, occupying Palestinian territory as well as the territory of two Arab States. For this expansionist policy, it depends on a huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological — as well as conventional missiles. It is the only State in the area that has not yet acceded to the NPT. It persists in its refusal to implement Security Council resolution 487 (1981), which calls on Israel by name to place all of its nuclear installations under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

This situation jeopardizes international and regional peace and security. It encourages and intensifies the arms race in the area. It also exposes the double standard of the policy pursued by the United States of America with regard to the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. In this respect, the United States goes to excessive lengths in interpreting the requirements of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), especially section C, which applies specifically to Iraq.

It disregards the fact that paragraph 14 of section C of that resolution, which was adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter, refers to the fact that the disarmament measures to be taken by Iraq in the field of disarmament represent steps towards the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. That paragraph has been disregarded since the first review of the implementation of resolution 687 (1991); so far the IAEA and the Special Commission have taken no operative measures in that respect because of pressures exerted by the United States of America. In order for the Security Council to be truthful, and to carefully and comprehensively implement the requirements of resolution 687 (1991), it must consider the implementation of that particular paragraph.

Some delegations have referred to the implementation by Iraq of its commitments in accordance with resolution 687 (1991). In this respect, we wish to reaffirm the following facts. Iraq has been cooperating with the Special Commission, as well as with the IAEA, for seven and an half years. It has implemented the requirements of resolution 687 (1991), including all disarmament requirements in the three areas of chemical weapons, biological weapons and missiles. Some believe that certain questions remain unanswered in the area of biological weapons. We wish to reaffirm that this is the result of a misunderstanding caused by the unprofessional approach of the Special Commission in confusing the main elements with the marginal elements and the requirements of disarmament with other requirements.

We have asked the Special Commission more than once — most recently during the meeting between Mr. Tariq Aziz and Mr. Butler, which took place on 3 August 1998 — to present any evidence that Iraq has kept certain weapons prohibited by resolution 687 (1991) or to prove that there are relevant weapons factories, equipment or devices that have not been destroyed. Mr. Butler has not yet answered that question. As for the nuclear aspect, paragraph 23 of the most recent IAEA semi-annual report to the Council, contained in document S/1998/927, states,

> "Should Iraq recommence full cooperation with IAEA, there would be no impediment to the full implementation of the Agency's OMV plan and, as part of that plan, the further investigation of the few remaining questions and concerns and any other aspect of Iraq's clandestine nuclear programme arising out of new information coming to the Agency's attention."

However, for political reasons the United States of America is still opposed to relinquishing continuous control.

As we underline the high priority we attach to the disarmament in the area of nuclear weapons, as well as of other weapons of mass destruction, we do not want to disparage the efforts being made by the international community to control conventional weapons, reduce military budgets or encourage countries exporting such weapons, foremost among which is the United States of America, from taking action to reduce their export of such weapons.

We wish to reaffirm in this respect the substantive link between disarmament and development. For example, the proliferation of civil wars and local, regional and international conflicts, especially when one Power has unilaterally taken on the role of leading the world, cannot be attributed to small arms. The roots of such conflicts are found in the colonial legacy, underdevelopment, the incessant marginalization of the economies of developing countries and the widening gap between North and South. The combination of all these factors results in multitudes of unemployed who respond to any call for violence. If we were to adopt sustainable development as a goal, divert the disarmament dividend towards development and provide employment opportunities for all in an international environment characterized by economic and political security, we could help all those unemployed persons turn their swords into ploughshares.

Mr. Sukayri (Jordan): On behalf of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, may I at the outset extend to you, Mr. Chairman, our congratulations on your election. We are confident that under your able chairmanship this Committee will be able to carry out its responsibilities most efficiently. May I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and wish them all every success, and also assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation. In particular, it gives me great pleasure to see my colleague and dear friend Motaz Zahran assuming the rapporteurship of this Committee.

The First Committee meets this year against the backdrop of both remarkable achievements and serious challenges in the field of international security and disarmament. On the remarkable achievements side of the balance sheet, we find such positive developments as the signature by 130 countries of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, with the target number of ratifications required for its entry into force drawing near; the recent decision by the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; the continued work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) Preparatory Committee on setting up a verification system for the CTBT; the continued work of the Biological Weapons Convention Ad Hoc Group aiming at establishing a verification and compliance regime for the biological and toxin weapons Convention, as well as the recent convening of an informal ministerial meeting devoted to strengthening the Convention; and, finally, the adoption of, and accession by many States to, a Model Protocol Additional to existing safeguards agreements between Member States and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

On the other side of the balance sheet, we regrettably find such negative developments and situations as the nuclear tests in South Asia last May; the ongoing reluctance by the only State in the Middle East with considerable nuclear-weapon capabilities — Israel — to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to place all of its nuclear installations and facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency; the continued reluctance by the nuclear-weapon States to meet their obligations in compliance with article VI of the NPT by pursuing negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament; the failure to reach agreement on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV); and the failure so far to take practical steps towards broadening the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms to encompass military holdings and procurement through national production as well as stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

My country, Jordan, has always been committed to the cause of international peace and security. We have over the years advocated a peaceful settlement to the conflict in the Middle East, a settlement that could lead to a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region. We realize, as do many others within and outside the region, that for a durable peace to be achieved, positive steps towards confidence-building between the parties have to be taken, on top of such steps as freeing the region of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Since we met here last year, Jordan has adhered to the Chemical Weapons Convention, ratified the CTBT, signed the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines and signed with the IAEA an Additional Protocol for safeguards. By so doing, Jordan has completed its adherence to all international instruments providing for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons as well as the prohibition of other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons.

It is noteworthy in this context that the General Assembly has over the last two decades called upon all States in the Middle East that have not yet done so, particularly the only State in the region possessing considerable nuclear-weapon capabilities, to adhere without delay to the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty and to place all of its nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the IAEA. All States in the Middle East except Israel are now parties to the NPT.

Since 1974, the General Assembly has been calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, and that resolution has since 1980 gained more momentum through its adoption by consensus. Furthermore, in paragraph 5 of its resolution on the Middle East, the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference called upon all States in the region to

> "take practical steps in appropriate forums aimed at making progress towards, *inter alia*, the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems, and to refrain from taking any measures that preclude the achievement of this objective" *(NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), p. 14)*.

Paragraph 6 of that same resolution called upon all States parties to the NPT, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to extend their cooperation and to exert their utmost efforts with a view to ensuring the achievement of that goal. Unfortunately, more than three years after the historic 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, no indication of such efforts has so far been felt in the region.

Here, we cannot but reiterate our conviction, as we have done time and again, that the chances for a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the Middle East look too gloomy without confidence-building between the parties involved. Confidence, however, can never be attainable with the existence of weapons of mass destruction in the region.

I now turn to other issues on our agenda at this session. As the turn of the century draws near, the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is capturing more attention. Jordan has actively participated in the two sessions of the Preparatory Committee in New York and Geneva. We regret, however, the fact that the second session in Geneva did not allow for tangible results on substantive issues and that the Committee was therefore not able to submit recommendations to the next session. We hope that the third session next year will have better chances for success and we urge all participants in that session to work diligently to strengthen the review process and to come out with consensus recommendations.

As far as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is concerned, we are encouraged by the fact that, so far, 150 States have signed the Treaty and 21 have deposited instruments of ratification. We join other Member States which have called on all countries that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty, particularly those 44 States whose ratification is needed for the Treaty to come into force.

We are also encouraged by the fact that, finally, serious negotiations will soon start aiming at the conclusion of a non-discriminatory and universally applicable convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Jordan has on many occasion reiterated the importance of a fissile material cut-off treaty as a significant step towards the achievement of both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

The decision of the Conference on Disarmament to set up an Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Assurances is certainly an important step towards assuring non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In order to be effective, such assurances should take the form of international, legally binding instruments. They should definitely go beyond the limited scope of the assurances so far given, whether by Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) or by any other unilateral or multilateral statements or declarations.

Jordan has been a staunch supporter of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We regard the Register as an indispensable mechanism for achieving transparency in armaments, which leads to confidence-building, especially in such conflict-prone regions as the Middle East. However, we believe that the Register may not be effective unless its scope is enlarged to include military holdings and procurement through national production, as well as weapons of mass destruction. We therefore regret the fact that the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms failed at its last session to deal with this problem. We hope that the upcoming session of the Panel in the year 2000 will be able to straighten out this situation.

As I outlined earlier, Jordan recently signed the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This step reaffirmed our commitment to helping to eliminate that most excessively injurious and inhumane weapon, which has indiscriminate effects, especially on children and other innocent civilians. Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, in her capacity as patron of the Landmine Survivors Network, is leading and contributing to the worldwide campaign to rid the world of anti-personnel landmines. We hope that all Member States, particularly those that are financially and technically capable, will join efforts for both demining and providing assistance for landmine victims.

Weapons of mass destruction and landmines are not the only challenges to the survival of mankind. Small arms also pose a serious threat to all nations. We welcome recent efforts to highlight this problem with a view to reaching consensus on guidelines for a comprehensive approach to combating illicit trafficking in conventional weapons. We do support all positive steps towards convening an international conference on the illicit arms trade.

Finally, on the question of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), we share the disappointment expressed in this room by many delegations over the failure of the Disarmament Commission, during its 1998 session, to achieve consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV. We believe that it has become imperative that we agree at the current General Assembly session on a specific date for SSOD IV, as well as on its objectives and agenda.

Mr. Al-Besbas (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First of all, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau on their election.

Our Committee meets this year in circumstances that are discouraging with regard to disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament and policies related thereto. We were all witness to the recent nuclear explosions in South Asia that have raised international concern and we have all heard the accusations made in this regard. Why did these explosions take place? For several years, through the First Committee, we have met regularly in our efforts to attain the noble objectives of freeing the world from weapons of mass destruction, of strengthening international peace and security, and of building mutual confidence among the peoples of the world. Through our material observations, we have noted that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is continuing and that we have been unable to end it. There must therefore be some flaw in our methods of work or in our priorities that has prevented us from achieving general and global progress in nuclear disarmament.

Many countries share our view that the principal flaw is our ongoing focus on nuclear non-proliferation policies to the detriment of the most important issue: nuclear disarmament. This is not a new issue and we, along with others, have insisted that we concentrate on nuclear disarmament. We wish to reiterate in this regard that, if we do not take this matter into serious account in our work, our efforts will fail and our problems persist.

The answer to our question about the reasons for the recent nuclear explosions in South Asia should make us face some important facts that are not to be ignored. We must take account of those facts in our debates and as we adopt our draft resolutions. Those explosions may also reflect a refusal to accept the prevailing nuclear imbalance and the fact that there are two categories of States: nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States; States that are allowed to continue developing nuclear weapons and States that are forbidden to do so. This state of affairs must change. In line with the principles of nuclear disarmament, the First Committee has been working in that direction for a number of years, and it is not proper for certain countries to refuse to cooperate.

Further evidence of the indifference of nuclear-weapon States to their commitments under article VI of the NPT is to be found in the lack of effective security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, which face a nuclear threat — in spite of the 1995 decision to extend the Treaty indefinitely. Still more evidence of this indifference and of the chaos and double standards that prevail in the nuclear situation lies in the possession of offensive nuclear weapons by some States not officially classified as nuclear-weapon States by the terms of the non-proliferation Treaty. While some States are pursued day and night, with force, with threats and with accusations, other States have the freedom to do as they like.

The nuclear explosions in Asia have demonstrated that the doctrine of nuclear deterrence still prevails, despite the end of the cold war and despite the provisions of the NPT and of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The inventor of that doctrine bears the blame for its existence; it has not abandoned it, even though it would have us believe the opposite. These nuclear arsenals continue to exist and to be developed and transferred.

All of this bears out our conviction that the ideal, and most efficient, solution is to adopt a comprehensive strategy based on the principle of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We must not simply be content with the non-proliferation Treaty, for that Treaty is inadequate. It has been suggested that the nuclear explosions in South Asia do not indicate any lack of effectiveness in the NPT and in the CTBT, since the countries that carried out those tests are not parties to those Treaties. But that is inaccurate and does not reflect the facts. Those countries have refused in principle to accede to the Treaties because of their weaknesses and shortcomings. The Treaties address horizontal nuclear proliferation but add nothing when it comes to nuclear disarmament or the reduction of stockpiles.

Brazil's accession to the NPT pleases us, because it reduces the number of countries remaining outside the Treaty regime and reduces the nuclear threat facing the world. Nonetheless, we aspire to universality for the Treaty; this goal was adopted in the 1995 decision on the review and extension of the Treaty. Universality cannot be achieved so long as there are nuclear Powers outside the Treaty; here I would recall Israel's nuclear capabilities, which are not subject to any international safeguards and which pose a genuine threat to the Middle East. The implications of that threat are unforeseeable. We cannot ignore Israel's continued refusal to accept International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards for its nuclear installations and the indifference of many Western States with respect to the whole question of Israeli nuclear weapons. The continued handling of the issue in this way, without attaching the necessary importance to it, reflects a double standard, which is precisely what we in the First Committee must avoid.

For several years, Arab countries have been working towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That initiative is aimed at curbing all weapons of mass destruction. The major obstacle is Israel's refusal to participate in such a zone on the pretext of national security issues. That pretext has been used more than once to evade a commitment to create the zone and to avoid accession to the non-proliferation Treaty; it cannot and should not be accepted, because it harks back to the days of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which we must go beyond. That pretext will force the States of the region to seek adequate means of protecting their own national security, which will lead to continued tension and conflict in the region.

The Conference on Disarmament has created two ad hoc committees: on a fissile materials cut-off treaty and on a convention on security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States. This is a positive development. We hope that it will be possible to avoid gaps like those that are to be found in past conventions and adopt a convention that will not simply ban the production of fissile materials but will call for the elimination of stockpiles of such materials. Such a convention would contribute to nuclear non-proliferation and to the elimination of stockpiles of nuclear weapons. We hope that the conference will be able to create an effective system providing real safeguards for non-nuclear States against any nuclear threat against them.

The Disarmament Commission was not able at its last session to reach a collective agreement regarding the objectives and agenda of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We regret this because we are convinced of the need to hold such a session, especially under the current circumstances, where the disarmament has suffered certain setbacks. We hope that the Disarmament Commission will soon be able to reach an agreement on the details for that session, because we feel that this would contribute to the establishment of a future strategy for disarmament in the world. We hope that we will be able to decide on the holding of the session in a time-frame in keeping with the present circumstances.

The failure of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is disappointing. That failure was not brought about by any important factors, but rather by the fact that one delegation adopted an obstinate and illogical attitude, choosing to oppose the will of 96 States parties to the Treaty. That attitude was based on its rejection of the mention of nuclear weapons possessed by Israel, which is already mentioned in a resolution of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Finally, I would like to refer to the question of landmines. Libya is one of the countries that suffers tremendously from the consequences of wars. According to United Nations estimates, there are more than 10 million landmines on Libyan territory, creating much difficulty and suffering for us. We are still suffering in human and financial terms.

Although the Ottawa Convention represents a humane step towards the elimination of landmines from the world, it still has many shortcomings. We would have liked the Convention to be more global, especially in providing assistance in demining. Demining is difficult for a country such as mine to do on its own because of the great amount of technical and material resources it requires, including in cartographic cooperation for locating mines.

We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will examine this issue and take measures concerning the elimination of landmines throughout the world, bearing in mind the assistance that is necessary and the need for the countries responsible for those mines to extend assistance and maps to the countries affected.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I regret to be obliged to exercise my right of reply in response to what was said in the morning meeting today by Ambassador Robbie Sabel of Israel. Why do I regret this? Because I have known Ambassador Sabel for many years, and he has been part of the negotiations between Egypt and Israel for even longer and knows better than what was said in this morning's meeting.

Ambassador Sabel, after citing long security arguments, trying to justify why Israel did not join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and did not subject its nuclear facilities to full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, chose to note with unhappiness that Egypt is one of the Arab States that has not signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) — as if it were the right of Israel alone to keep ambiguous nuclear capabilities and policies to protect its security while all Arab countries, and maybe Egypt in particular, should forgo their security concerns and ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). This is an unacceptable concept in our view and will not lead anywhere.

Egypt has repeatedly stressed that it is ready, able and willing to ratify the CWC and the BWC in a package that must include Israel's ratification of the NPT and subject all its nuclear facilities to full-scope IAEA safeguards. This was clearly demonstrated by the initiative to declare the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, launched by President Hosni Mubarak in 1991. This was stressed again in 1998 by President Mubarak, with no positive sign on the part of Israel.

At the same time, if Israel is really concerned about the Chemical Weapons Convention, it should also clear up some of the ambiguities surrounding its activities in the field of chemical weapons. For instance, it has to justify the use of chemical agents in the failed assassination attempt against Mr. Khaled Meshaal conducted in Amman by agents of the Mossad using forged Canadian passports. It also has to provide information and an explanation as to why the El Al flight that crashed in the Netherlands a few years ago was carrying chemical agents en route to Israel. It also has to clarify the fate of the lost 30 tons of cargo that was aboard that plane.

Israel must realize that security does not mean the security of Israel alone; it means the security of all States in the Middle East region and is an interrelated and integrated issue that cannot be dealt with in bits and pieces.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): In one of the statements this morning, reference was made to the military capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this connection, my delegation wishes to reiterate the position commonly shared by all States in the Middle East that the sole threat to the security and stability of the Middle East stems from Israel's nuclear capabilities and its access to advanced missile technology. This position not only signifies a political notion; rather, it asserts a deep and serious concern based on facts and realities. Of course, Iran, like others in the region, cannot remain idle against the threat posed to the region by Israeli mass-destruction capabilities.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a party to all conventions on weapons of mass destruction, without exception, and considers its missile technology a legitimate conventional defensive means. Iran's deterrent missile technology serves solely for self-defence and, as was clearly pointed out by the Iranian Foreign Ministry statement, this technology does not constitute a threat to any country and is not set up for first use.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Earlier this morning the Israeli delegation mentioned the so-called crisis. As for the crisis, we think it is on the side of Israel. There is a real crisis in the Middle East peace process because of Israel's continued defiance of the principle of land for peace. Continued occupation of Arab lands creates a crisis and constitutes a real threat to peace in the region. Israel should not deflect this crisis of its own onto other countries.

My delegation urges Israel to pull its troops out of all occupied Arab lands without condition, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions. My delegation advises Israel not to follow the United States blindly in addressing the Korean peninsula.

In earlier remarks the United States claimed that my country's satellite launch was provocative. This is nonsense. Our satellite launch was not provocative; rather, it was for the peaceful utilization of the universe, to which every nation has a legitimate right. However, the continued accusations of the United States regarding our satellite launch only reveal the attempts of the United States to camouflage its aggressive policy in the Korean peninsula and its dislike of developing countries making new scientific and technological advances.

My delegation urges the United States to stop making accusations against my country and to stop using our satellite launch for its own political purposes in an attempt to stifle my country. I would like the international community to understand correctly the motives that lie behind some countries' unjust accusations regarding our satellite launch.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): I am taking the floor because this morning the Committee was subjected to some more of the lies that the Ethiopian delegation has been spreading about Eritrea during this session of the General Assembly. Indeed, the Ethiopian delegation seems to have refined lying into a diplomatic art form. Luckily for Eritrea, the world is seeing through these lies, which are being peddled in a vain attempt to camouflage the annexionist and expansionist policies of the Government of Ethiopia and its gross violations of the rights of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin — violations that the world community has already soundly condemned.

The Ethiopian representative accuses the Government of Eritrea of irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. Nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary, it is the Government of Ethiopia that should stand accused of this matter, and there are third-party reports verifying this. This baseless charge could have been dismissed as a sign of the irresponsibility of a bankrupt diplomacy, if it had not been for the seriousness of the matter.

The Ethiopian representative also accused Eritrea of committing aggression. This charge has already been refuted quite easily at this session of the General Assembly, as well as in other forums. However, let me refer to General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX) of 1974 so that the identity of the real aggressor in this conflict can be confirmed. Article 3 of the annex to the resolution defines aggression as, *inter alia*:

> "The invasion or attack by the armed forces of a State of the territory of another State ...;
>
> "Bombardment by the armed forces of a State against the territory of another State ...;
>
> "The blockade of the ports ... of a State".

Third parties will verify that it was Ethiopia that crossed into Eritrean territory in July 1997 and again on 5 June 1998, after the Ethiopian Prime Minister declared war on 4 June 1998. It was Ethiopia that announced to the world that it had blockaded the Eritrean sea coast. It was Ethiopia that bombarded Asmara International Airport. It is Ethiopia that is still threatening to use force again. These are truths that no amount of diplomatic subterfuge and lying can camouflage.

Allow me to quote only one example from third-party reports on the matter. In a recent article in *Combat and Survival*, volume X, issue 7, of October 1998, Paul Harris writes as follows:

> "The bloody border conflict between these two neighbouring States in the Horn of Africa started on May 6 this year. Three Lieutenant Colonels of the EDF (Eritrean Defence Force), together with four soldiers, travelled to the Badme border area to investigate reports that Ethiopian administrators and police had moved into an area contested between the two countries. They found Ethiopian militias there, were taken aside and shot.
>
> "After almost two weeks of light skirmishing, full-scale war erupted. On June 5 at 14.13 hours three Ethiopian MIG-23 jets attacked Asmara airport. Fifty minutes later, Eritrean jets bombed the MIGs' military base in Ethiopia at Mekele.
>
> "Unknown to the Eritrean Air Force, the Ethiopians had admitted large numbers of civilians to the military airport to welcome back their 'heroic' pilots. Around 40 civilians died in the air attack. Next day, the Ethiopians attacked Asmara again with three MIG-23s, but accurate anti-aircraft fire brought down two of the attacking aircraft.
>
> "Within 24 hours full-scale war had broken out on the borders. The following day, the Ethiopians attacked hundreds of miles away to the east with a drive towards the Eritrean Red Sea port of Assab. Although border incursions were alleged, it seems more likely that the Ethiopians had decided to attempt to secure a much needed port on the Red Sea. In the event, the Ethiopian regular army and militias of the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF) were beaten back on all three fronts."

Nothing could be clearer than that. The Eritrean delegation therefore wishes not only to flatly reject such mendacity but to invite all members of the Committee to ascertain which side of the border has been mined and which of the two Governments has in fact committed aggression by crossing international borders. Here and now, I also request the Ethiopian representative to extend a similar invitation, if he is convinced of the truthfulness of his statements. There is an Amharic proverb which informs us that the whip cries as it lashes. That is the case with Ethiopia.

Mr. Sabel (Israel): Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz and I have spent many hours trying — not always successfully — to improve the situation in the Middle East, and, although we do not always reach agreement, I am a great admirer of both his ability and his good humour. I hope we will be able to continue thus.

I believe that his words reflect the need for peace to exist between States in the area, which would enable them to negotiate the issues we have been talking about — because they have to be negotiated between States at peace. In the same way that Jordan and the Palestinians followed Egyptian leadership and negotiated agreements, I sincerely hope and believe that other States in the area will follow suit, and that when we are at peace we will be able to negotiate the very difficult and dangerous issues that the Egyptian Ambassador referred to. They need to be negotiated; but the point we are making is that they need to be negotiated between States that recognize each other and are at peace with each other.

With reference to another speaker, I should like to say that I listened carefully with a certain amount of incredulity to Iraqi calls for "complete and total disarmament". I listened in particular to the calls and recommendations as to how Israel should behave. I hope that delegations, including my Egyptian colleague, appreciate why, in the realm of arms control, Israel treats Iraqi recommendations as to how we should behave in the same manner as porcupines make love: very, very carefully.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): Given the late hour, I will try to be very brief. Last Friday, during the seventh meeting of this Committee, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea touched extensively on the issue of peace and security on the Korean peninsula in his general statement. Although, in the light of the critical importance we attach to the issue, we basically understand his concerns, we found his statement to be misleading and somewhat distorted. Therefore, for the sake of the record of this Committee, my delegation would like to make the following points.

First, we are quite disappointed to note that the statements of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea failed to adequately address one of the most pressing questions on the Korean Peninsula: disarmament in the area of weapons of mass destruction. While the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did assert that there was a need to remove the cold-war structure of confrontation and to establish durable peace on the Korean peninsula, it did not listen to the international community's call for a Korean peninsula free from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. If the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's intention that we work together for the peace and security of the Korean peninsula is really genuine, it should take concrete actions to eliminate from the region the lingering horror of weapons of mass destruction. It should join international efforts to strengthen the global regime of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by fully cooperating for the full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the safeguards agreement, as well as by adhering expeditiously to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

In this connection, my delegation wishes to reiterate once again that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is under full legal obligation as a party to the NPT and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement, despite all the allegations put forward during the statement made last Thursday. This has been reaffirmed by the international community on several occasions — I do not need read out the entire list of the relevant resolutions and statements. I believe that one of the most important documents in this regard is the Security Council presidential statement of 4 November 1994, S/PRST/1994/64, which was adopted by the Council after the Democratic People's Republic of Korea signed the Agreed Framework, and which states in its fifth paragraph,

> "The Security takes note of the decision of the DPRK in the Agreed Framework to remain a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons."

It then refers to the actions that were supposed to be taken by North Korea.

The IAEA General Conference also adopted relevant resolutions on 25 September 1998, 3 October 1997, 20 September 1996 and 22 September 1995 — and the list goes on. I will finish this point by saying that any argument against such a truce will not be acceptable to this delegation or to the international community.

Secondly, as for the issue of Korean unification, to which the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea referred at length in his statement last Friday, my delegation shares the belief that unification is one of the most important goals for all Koreans and that division and confrontation should not be perpetuated. However, where we differ is on how to achieve this long-cherished goal of unification. Unfortunately, the North claims to stand for unification based on its own unilateral unification formula, while rejecting meaningful dialogue and exchanges aimed at achieving genuine reconciliation with the South. That approach is akin to putting the cart before the horse. How could two entities that have walked totally different paths for almost half a century come together and realize unification in a day, without a reconciliation process? Such a process is quintessential to meaningful progress towards eventual unification.

It is a harsh reality that mistrust still lingers in the relations between the two Koreas, and even determined efforts to nurture peaceful coexistence as an interim arrangement pending reunification are being hindered due to the lack of genuine political will.

The fact is that there can be no quantum leap towards the peaceful reunification of divided nations. Reunification will take place gradually rather than suddenly and will come through concrete actions based on practical and realistic approaches — not through words of propaganda.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would kindly ask the representative of the Republic of Korea to shorten his statement.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): I have just a few paragraphs left, Mr. Chairman. I will try my best to comply with your request.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I wish to remind the representative of the Republic of Korea that the rules of the General Assembly restrict rights of reply to a 10-minute period on the first occasion and to five minutes on the second. I would be grateful if he would take this into account.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence.

Both Koreas have already entered into a binding accord on Inter-Korean reconciliation, cooperation and non-aggression in 1992 that presented a detailed road map towards national reconciliation and reunification. What is most important and what is urgently needed now is to faithfully implement this basic instrument through meaningful dialogue and cooperation, thus laying a firm foundation for eventual reunification.

Lastly, with regard to the issue of building a durable peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula, my delegation believes that the ongoing process of four-party talks will effectively provide a pragmatic path towards the establishment of a new peace regime that would replace the current armistice regime.

As is the case with the South-North dialogue, my Government attaches great importance to the process of four-party talks, also meant to be mutually complementary for enduring peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. In this regard, my Government considers the holding of the third round of the four-party talks in Geneva this week to be a momentous occasion. We earnestly hope that these talks can achieve substantial progress.

To conclude, my delegations wishes to reaffirm the commitment of my Government actively to pursue our engagement policy, the "sunshine policy", to improve inter-Korean relations through dialogue and cooperation.

Mr. Nega (Ethiopia): We have just listened to the statement by the representative of Eritrea, which should not come as a surprise to anyone who is familiar with the behaviour and actions of the Government of Eritrea, because the policy of the Government of Eritrea has consistently been to try to confuse and hoodwink the international community.

This morning in our statement we mentioned two specific and concrete points with reference to Eritrea, although the list should have been longer. One was that the Eritrea aggression of 12 May 1998 against Ethiopia represents a serious challenge to peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

Secondly, we said that the Eritrean regime is extensively and indiscriminately using anti-personnel landmines, targeting civilians in this war of aggression against Ethiopia. We also pointed out that this action by the Eritrean Government constitutes a grave breach of the norms of international humanitarian law and undermines ongoing regional and international efforts to ban and eliminate anti-personnel landmines.

However, as I said earlier, the list of illegal and irresponsible actions carried out by the Government of Eritrea is long, so I will mention just one more. The Government of Eritrea, in its war of aggression against Ethiopia, unleashed on 5 June 1998, in broad daylight, an aerial attack on an elementary school using cluster and napalm bombs, in which 55 innocent schoolchildren were slaughtered mercilessly and 146 others wounded. We have concrete evidence of these facts, which were covered by the international media. The representative of Eritrea here in this Committee cannot hide this truth.

How did Eritrea respond to this barbaric act? Statements were made in Asmara, at the highest political level, to justify this cold-blooded murder of innocent schoolchildren. They said that war has no rules, but this Committee says that war does have rules. We are all striving to eliminate the causes and the modalities of wars. Ethiopia has been and remains part of this international endeavour even though we are confronted with this challenge from our neighbour.

In spite of the representative of Ethiopia's denials, baseless counter-accusations and bizarre attempts to present Ethiopia, the victim of their aggression, as an aggressor, Eritrea's aggression against Ethiopia and its irresponsible actions and behaviour are no secret to anyone, let alone this body — one of the main Committees of the General Assembly responsible for international security and disarmament affairs.

The entire world knows these facts. The Eritrean authorities themselves know it in spite of their repeated attempts to confuse and hoodwink the international community. There have been a number of major initiatives and proposals by mutual friends as well as by the Organization of African Unity and the Security Council on the crisis between the two countries.

First, the proposal by the United States and Rwandan facilitators, among other things, called on Eritrea to withdraw from the Ethiopian territory of Badme and its environs. That document, which I have here with me, was issued as an official document of the Security Council on 10 June 1998 under the symbol S/1998/496. I am sure that all representatives are aware of it.

Secondly, the thirty-fourth Assembly of the OAU Heads of State and Government adopted a decision endorsing the aforementioned proposal by the United States and Rwandan facilitators and again called upon Eritrea and Ethiopia to accept and implement the proposal. Ethiopia accepted and was ready to implement that proposal. Eritrea rejected both the initiative of the facilitators and the OAU decision.

Thirdly, the Security Council adopted resolution 1177 (1998), strongly supporting the OAU decision. Again, Eritrea prevaricated.

Most recently, the OAU ministerial committee dealing with the crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea also came to two important conclusions that we hoped would put to rest this whole bizarre situation. The first of the two conclusions is the following: "Badme and its environs were administered by Ethiopia before May 12, 1998". Badme town is still occupied by Eritrea as a result of its aggression, which its representative was denying a while ago. The second conclusion was that "what happened in Badme between 6 and 12 May 1998 constitutes a fundamental element of the crisis" between the two countries. The fundamental element of the crisis was the aggression of Eritrea unleashed against Ethiopia. And yet, here today, in front of all of us, the representative of Eritrea again mentioned a non-existent third-party verification, whose origins we do not know.

I see, Sir, that you are looking at your watch. I shall finish very soon. There is concrete evidence and facts that testify beyond a reasonable doubt that Eritrea is the aggressor. There is no question about it. Let them acknowledge it. Let them withdraw and this matter will be settled. That is what we said, that is what we were going to say and that is what the international community is telling them. We do not need to try to divert attention by making baseless accusations.

Mr. Al-Anbuge (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I do not wish to engage in polemics with the representative of an entity that arose through aggression and expansion. However, I wish to confirm once again my statement of this afternoon before this Committee. The statement made by the representative to whom I refer is false, null and void and untenable. It was intended to raise a smoke screen over his position on disarmament in general.

The Chairman: I now call on those representatives who wish to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply. I remind them that their statements are limited to five minutes, according to the rules.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to place on record that my delegation reserves the right to reply at a later date.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): I wish only to point out three or four facts.

On the question of the air attack on Asmara International Airport, it was the representative of Ethiopia's own Prime Minister, in an interview with Radio Ethiopia in July and quoted by the BBC the next day, who admitted to attacking first as a preemptive measure.

We are being accused of trying to confuse and confound people. If we invite third-party observation for verification on the spot, and the Ethiopians refuse to do so, members can draw their own conclusions as to who is obstructing verification.

As to the attack on Mekele airport, despite the distortions of the representative of Ethiopia, the Eritrean people expressed sorrow publicly about the civilian casualties and extended condolences to the bereaved families, without taking responsibility.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) is still seized of the matter and everybody knows it — at least, all the African representatives here know it. The OAU mission was to report its recommendations this month, and this has been postponed until mid-November. If the OAU has decided on the matter, how is it then possible that the OAU is still seized of it?

Whatever the Ethiopian representative may say, we have not crossed international borders. We have not invaded Ethiopia. They have yet to produce a map or to describe which territory has been invaded and occupied by us. We have presented all the maps necessary for evidence.

Mr. Nega (Ethiopia): The question is not a question of maps. Aggression cannot be conducted on a map. The representative of Eritrea brought to our attention the resolution of the General Assembly on the definition of aggression. It does not mention any map. Anyway, maps will come, of course, after the Eritrean aggression is undone — after they withdraw from Ethiopian territory.

A number of points have been made here by the representative of Eritrea. I am glad that he made those statements. He said that the Eritrean people expressed sorrow. Yes, we expect the Eritrean people to express sorrow for what their Government did. But their Government did not express any sorrow. At the highest political level, they said that war does not have rules. Period. Is that the sorrow of the Government?

We have again heard that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) is seized with the matter. That is exactly what I said. The OAU is seized with the matter; the OAU has adopted a resolution at the highest level, issued as Security Council document S/1998/494. I do not want to tax the Committee's time reading it, but it is very clear, as I mentioned. The OAU has a clear position on this.

On third-party verification, we are invited and this representative is invited to accept the generous offer of third-party verification. A third party has already verified that Eritrea is in Ethiopia's territory. I cite that document. What other third parties? Professors from certain universities — are they third parties? We have the OAU as an independent third party.

Thus, I think things are very clear here as to who is the aggressor and who is the aggressee, who has the truth and who does not.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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